

## DIRECTED FIELD STUDIES STUDENT GUIDE

### Bachelor of Applied Business Administration (Distance)

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this guide is to provide students with the information they need to successfully prepare for their Directed Field Studies (DFS) courses in the Bachelor of Applied Business Administration (Distance) Degree program at SAIT Polytechnic.

#### OVERVIEW

Directed Field Studies (DFS) is the employment component of the Bachelor of Applied Business Administration Degree. Students are required to take DFS 1 and DFS 2 which are each 450 hour work terms in a suitable employment environment. Advanced credit for prior work experience will not be granted.

The primary purpose of the course is for students to integrate academic learning with their work placement by the practical application of theory into the workplace. An improvement in oral and written communication skills along with enhancing the ability for students to work well with others is a further objective of the course. As well, students will be provided with strategies for success in the workplace and encouraged to apply what they have learned in their current industry placement.

#### PREREQUISITES

| Directed Field Studies 1                                      | Directed Field Studies 2                                    |
|---|---|
| MKTG 224 - Marketing Fundamentals (MK1)                       | ACWE 409 - Directed Field Studies 1 (DF1)                   |
| MGMT 240 - Organizational Behavior (OB1)                      | ACCT 480 – E-Business (EE1)                                 |
| BCPT 383 - Internet Applications for Financial Managers (IA1) | ACCT 483 – Database Management for Financial Managers (DM1) |
| BCPT 385 - Network Management for Financial Managers (NM1)    |   |

Both DFS 1 & DFS 2 are offered in all four sessions allowing maximum flexibility to students.

#### EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

**Students are responsible for finding suitable employment for Directed Field Studies and for ensuring that it meets the course requirements.**

The requirements are:

- Paid employment in a full-time accounting position (an information technology position is acceptable for Accounting and IT majors).

- 450 hours of work over each DFS course.
- Ability to complete a work related project during the course session.
- Note: Commission-based employment and volunteer work **will not be** accepted as suitable DFS employment.

The following are examples of DFS eligible employment and business organizations to consider listed randomly:

| <b>Roles</b>                        | <b>Organizations</b>  |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| AP, AR, Payroll Clerk – any level   | Professional firms – Lawyers, architects, doctors, dentists                         |
| Cost Accountant / Analyst           | Government – Federal, Provincial or Municipal                                       |
| Business Analyst                    | Non-Profit Organizations  |
| Internal Audit / Project Accountant | Small – Medium sized companies  |
| Joint venture Accountant            | Corporations – construction, oil & gas, manufacturing, airlines, retail, automotive |
| Accounting Technician               | Public Practice Accounting Firms – CGA, CMA or CA                                   |

Positions can be at any level in an organization – entry level to controller. If you are unsure, you can email a job description to the DFS Coordinator prior to the course start for review.

## **EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES**

During a student’s DFS term, employers have the following responsibilities:

- Complete the Directed Field Studies Practicum Agreement within one week of the start of the session.
- Provide a minimum of 450 hours of work in an accounting or IT related position over the DFS course.
- Provide the student with a written job description or outline of the main duties of the position before the start of the placement.
- Provide the student with exposure to as many subject areas within the degree program as is feasible during the placement.
- Supervise the student and provide safe working conditions.
- Pay the student the salary normally associated with the position.
- Confirm that the minimum work hours have been completed, and provide SAIT with an evaluation of the student’s work performance.
- Identify a contact person (normally the student’s immediate supervisor) to liaise with the student’s academic mentor as necessary.
- Complete an evaluation of the student’s work at the end of the term.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Students have the following responsibilities during their DFS terms:

- Complete a minimum of 450 hours of work as assigned by the employer.
- Submit case studies, assignments, research paper and evaluations as required by the course.

- Complete a work related project (proposal, written report and presentation) that may be suitable for implementation in the employer’s organization, and report on it to the academic mentor.
- Adhere to all employer policies in the workplace.
- Maintain the employer’s confidentiality.

## SAIT POLYTECHNIC RESPONSIBILITIES

SAIT’s responsibilities, which will be fulfilled by an assigned academic mentor, are to:

- Support the student by being available for questions and advice
- Act as a liaison between SAIT and the employer as necessary
- Assess the projects submitted by the student and provide feedback to the student
- Strictly maintain the confidentiality of the student and employer

## DFS PRACTICUM AGREEMENT

All students must have a practicum agreement signed by themselves and their employer and then returned to SAIT. A link to the practicum agreement is available online at <https://www.cga-saitdegree.ca/directedfieldstudies.asp>. The practicum agreement should be dated using the start date and end date of the DFS course you are enrolled in. Signed agreements should be returned to SAIT by fax to 403-284-7086 or can be scanned and emailed to [cga-saitdegree@sait.ca](mailto:cga-saitdegree@sait.ca). Any student or employer questions about the practicum agreement should be directed to Tracey Bosch, DFS Coordinator ([tracey.bosch@sait.ca](mailto:tracey.bosch@sait.ca)).

The practicum agreement **must be signed and returned within one week** of the course start. Students can have the form completed and signed before the course starts.

## HOW DO I FIND A JOB?

Students should start planning for their DFS work term when they first enroll in the degree program. **Students are responsible for finding suitable employment for Directed Field Studies and for ensuring that it meets the course requirements.** To begin, it is important to develop a strong resume and cover letter and have it reviewed for feedback. One of the best ways to find a job is to discuss your degree program and career goals with as many people as possible. 90% of job opportunities are never posted in a public forum – they are obtained and developed through connections with friends, family members and colleagues. The table below has suggestions on public job postings that you should be familiar with and check regularly.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><a href="#"><u>SAIT student employment</u></a></p>          | <p>You must first request access, and post a draft resume. New positions are posted regularly. You should look under full time / part time and contract / temporary; search on key word accounting. If you cannot access, contact them for help at <a href="mailto:student.employment@sait.ca">student.employment@sait.ca</a> or 284-7313.</p> |
| <p><a href="#"><u>Gov't of Canada current postings</u></a></p> | <p>This search database has government jobs and others that you can search by keyword and by location.</p>   |

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b><u>CGA Student Members</u></b> | CGA student members can access CGA job postings online. Go to your CGA regional page and log in as a student member to view job postings.  |
| <b>Company Websites</b>           | Many companies post openings as well as student hiring programs directly on their websites. Look up companies that you would be interested in working for and follow their process to apply. If you cannot find anything on the website, contact the company and let them know of your interest – your initiative may be rewarded. |

## CONTACTING EMPLOYERS

When you contact employers you need to sell both yourself and the Applied Degree DFS program to the employer. In your cover letter or initial conversation, you should mention your program of studies and the DFS requirement to obtain two terms of work experience. It is not a lot of extra work for the employer; they will need to be willing to support your work project (completed on your personal time, not during work hours), and complete an evaluation of your work at the end of the term. The majority of employers find the work project beneficial to them, as it completes a project effort that needed to be done. Refer the employer to the employer responsibilities above, or print a copy for them. If the employer has questions you cannot answer, provide them with the contact information of the DFS Coordinator, Tracey Bosch ([tracey.bosch@sait.ca](mailto:tracey.bosch@sait.ca)).

As with any job search, your resume and cover letter give a strong first impression to a potential employer. Spend time on both documents and have them reviewed by several others. A spelling mistake or illogical comment can make the difference between being granted an interview and not. Research the company before you send a cover letter and personalize each cover letter to the company. Address your cover letter to the hiring manager whenever possible. If you are not sure what type of job experience you are looking for and are open to trying different options, you may need two versions of your resume. Do not send a resume that says your career goal is to succeed in *public practice* to a *corporation*. Likewise, do not indicate that your career goal is to ‘get a job to complete Directed Field Studies’ or ‘get a job to finish the degree’.

If you are granted an interview, it is time to do some more research. If you know someone who works for the company, talk to them. Research the company on the internet, and develop some questions to ask that show you have taken the time to understand their business. Showing initiative and desire to learn impresses the interviewer. Everyone is nervous at the beginning of an interview. The more prepared you are, the easier it will be to get over your nervousness and present yourself in a confident, clear manner.

## DFS COURSE COMPONENTS

DFS requires students to apply their academic knowledge to the workplace, and to focus on improving their goal setting, planning, and project management, ethics and communications skills. As well as the work experience, the course has required academic components as follows:

**Goals & Objectives:** Early in the course students are asked to provide a written description of their company, industry and job responsibilities and then set two goals that they want to achieve during the DFS term. Goals are aligned with accounting and IT competencies that students review and determine which ones they will focus on. The goals must be well defined and include an action plan to illustrate how they will be achieved. Students report on their progress on these goals at the end of the course on the student evaluation. The two goals set must be in different than, and in addition to the work project.

**Case Study & Research Paper:** In DFS 1 students complete a Case Study Analysis and a Case Report. The case study method is used in professional level examinations by both the CGA and CMA organizations, and thus DFS gives students an introduction to and practice using the case analysis process. In DFS 2 students complete a formal Research Paper. Students choose from a predetermined list of topics.

Distance students have readings available to them to help with both the Case Study analysis and the Research Paper.

**Computer Simulation:** Distance students complete a computer simulation case that involves both accounting and IT issues. A written case document is provided along with online media files that allow the student to view meetings related to the case and ask questions of the meeting participants. The simulation has two parts – one part is completed in each DFS course.

**Work Project:** In both DFS courses, students complete a work project to meet an identified need of their employer. This project must be different than the two course goals set in the Goals and Objectives assignment. A project proposal is prepared early in the academic term and submitted for approval by the academic mentor. Employers should be consulted on the project topic. Students work on the project throughout the term, and prepare a written report at the end of the course. Students will also present their project during the second academic resident weekend session. Students must consider their employer's confidentiality and discuss any concerns they may have with their instructor.

Some examples of student work projects are:

- Implement, or assist with implementation of software.
- Research software solutions for a predetermined need and make recommendation.
- Implement, or assist with implementation of a new policy or process.

- Document a procedure or process to be used in training or for internal control.
- Participate in a network upgrade or internet/intranet development.
- Assist your employer or a client with a specific project need.
- Industry research applicable to the employer or industry.

You can consult with your academic mentor at the beginning of the course to brainstorm project ideas applicable to your work. All students who have taken DFS to date have been able to determine a project topic. You can also consult with the DFS Coordinator prior to the start of DFS to query if a project idea that you are considering would be suitable.

**Evaluations:** Students evaluate themselves on their accounting and IT competencies in addition to an employer submitted evaluation. A part of the student self evaluation is a statement of progress on the goals and objectives set at the beginning of the term. This report analyzes whether goals were met, what challenges and constraints were faced, and what competencies were enhanced by the student's efforts.

**Mentor Communication:** Each student is assigned an instructor (academic mentor) to help the student achieve their goals and formulate their work project. The academic mentor should be consulted for questions or concerns throughout the course, and will create a classroom atmosphere through the use of the WebCT discussion board.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What is the tuition for Directed Field Studies?

Each CGA region sets the tuition for DFS, so consult with your regional CGA office. There are no required textbooks – all materials are available on line.

### 2. How do I register for DFS?

Once you have the prerequisites and have been accepted into the distance degree program, you register for DFS through your regional CGA office. Application forms for acceptance into the degree are available online at [www.cga-saitdegree.ca](http://www.cga-saitdegree.ca).

### 3. When should I take the DFS courses?

Distance students should take DFS after they have the required prerequisites and when it fits into their program of study.

### 4. When should I start looking for a job?

At a minimum, students should start their job search at the beginning of the preceding semester. For example, if you plan to enroll in DFS in May, your job search process should start no later than January. Many employers hire students 3 – 4 months prior to the start of a work term. Sending out resumes and researching companies is time consuming, and the interview process can stretch over several weeks. Preparing ahead of time and starting early is necessary for success.

Continuing education students and distance students who are already working in an accounting or IT environment can use their current position for their DFS studies. If you are unsure if your current position meets the requirements you can send a job description to the DFS Coordinator to have the position evaluated.

**5. Can I register for DFS without a job?**

Distance students cannot register without employment. The CGA session timing does not allow any additional weeks to meet the 450 hour requirement, and thus students must be working full time at the beginning of the DFS session start.

**6. Where can I work?**

Distance students can work anywhere in Canada or overseas, as long as they are registered through their regional CGA office.

**7. Can I take DFS and enroll in a CGA or SAIT degree course at the same time?**

Concurrent studies in other courses are not recommended for a student enrolled in DFS. Considering the workload of full time employment, academic components of DFS including the work project, it is anticipated that 8-10 hours per week will be required by the student to successfully complete the course.

**8. What is a passing grade in DFS? Do I need to earn a C+?**

A passing grade for this course is 50% and you do not need to earn a C+ in order to satisfy degree requirements. However, this course is weighted at 15 credits and a grade below a C+ can negatively impact a student's cumulative GPA. A student must achieve an overall GPA of 2.0 or C in order to graduate, therefore, it is strongly recommended that students make every effort to achieve a grade of C+ or higher in both DFS courses.

**9. What if I change jobs or become unemployed during a DFS course?**

Students are encouraged to remain in their current work position until the end of a DFS work term. If a student receives a promotion or transfer within their existing company, they should contact their instructor and discuss the impact of the changes on the work project undertaken or goals chosen. If a student is laid off or the company closes down during a DFS work term, they should contact their instructor immediately for guidance. If a student chooses to find other suitable employment, they should advise their instructor of their job search and discuss the impact this will have on their work project and goals.

**10. Who can I contact with further questions?**

Kimberly Jones, Program Administrator ([cga-saitdegree@sait.ca](mailto:cga-saitdegree@sait.ca)) or (403) 284-8439.  
Tracey Bosch, DFS Coordinator ([tracey.bosch@sait.ca](mailto:tracey.bosch@sait.ca)).

## TESTIMONIALS

Students find DFS a valuable course. Here are comments from students who have successfully completed DFS:

*As a CGA student who works primarily in the field of I.T. and business intelligence systems I was apprehensive about how much of a benefit DFS1 and 2 would be to me in terms of professional development. It appeared to me that it would be more suitable for someone who does not work in the field of I.T. but rather a traditional accounting role.*

*I have changed my opinion and am both surprised and delighted at how useful both DFS courses have been to me in my professional career. These courses not only address I.T. but project management, report writing, self assessment, best practices and advanced problem solving within the context of information systems analysis that is timely and relevant to today's current technology. All components of the course were extremely useful, however I personally found the DVDs Today Case Study that spanned both DFS courses to be relevant and an excellent way of applying all skills acquired through the SAIT/CGA degree program. The Case Study really allows you to put into practice what you have learned thus solidifying concepts and a realistic and practical problem solving environment.*

*Now that I have officially finished all my SAIT courses, I can honestly say that I will miss the curriculum because even though I work within the field of I.T., SAIT provided me with the opportunity to refine, articulate and expand my current skill set which I believe has contributed to both my professionalism and competence within both the I.T. and business/accounting sector.*

*Rachel O'Neil, CGA Student, ESRI Canada, Ontario*

*The Directed Field Studies Course allows the student to integrate many of the degree courses into the workplace. It benefits the student and the employer by providing the student a supportive learning environment to directly apply skills to projects that will result in improved processes and continued development of professionalism and initiative.*

*My experience with the DFS component of the Applied Business Administration Degree was very positive and challenging. I received guidance from the experienced instructors who were dedicated to helping the students achieve their goals and complete the course with a sense of accomplishment.*

*I find that the Applied Business Administration Degree program is most relevant to today's working environment by including courses on leadership and e-*

*commerce. These subjects are interesting, comprehensive and also fundamental to developing a skill set that is in demand.*

*Liana Dahl, CGA Student, Saputo Foods Limited, Alberta*

*The DFS program pushed me to apply my academic learning into a real life environment. I gained the experience of using my project management skills in situations relating to my workplace by applying what I had learned in the Database, E-Commerce, Project Management and the other preliminary courses. Making the direct connection between academic and workplace helped me to take the initiative at work and make our everyday work place activities more efficient and effective and has allowed me to come up with creative solutions for various projects. I have since become a technological leader and innovator in our department, which has opened doors to endless opportunities for my career.*

*Aaron Gallagher, CGA Student, Hallmark Canada, Ontario*

*The Directed Field Studies (DFS) courses provided me with an opportunity to plan and participate in interesting projects at my workplace. The project reports were used to guide the subsequent actions of my employer.*

*I learned the importance of carefully planning the scope of a project and adjusting the scope as the project progressed. It is easy to become overwhelmed with detail when working in a new area. My course mentor helped me deal with this challenge and I was able to complete my project and produce a useful report for the company management.*

*While working on my DFS courses, I found it necessary to review some of my academic material and consider how it can be used in practical ways to improve my analysis of real-world issues. These concepts take on new meaning when dealing with real investment decisions and employee responsibilities.*

*I enjoyed the presentations of the guest speakers during the weekend seminars. The student presentations gave me insight into the variety of issues that are encountered in the workplace. In summary, I found the DFS courses to be the most interesting component of the degree program.*

*Mark Morison, CMA Student, Alberta*

*Personally I think both DFS courses are useful. First I set up the goals to accomplish during the course. As I had recently joined this company before enrolling in the course, it provided me an opportunity to clearly understand the company's short and long term strategic business plan and learn about the company history. Secondly, this project gave me a chance to talk to my manager*

*in setting my personal goals and objectives for the year 2005. This helped me to prepare my Performance Development and Review report (PDR). Thirdly, this project also gave me opportunities to talk to my co-workers within the Accounting and Finance department as well as IT and Marketing which improved my communication skills. Lastly I liked the case study of the video rental company. I applied what I learned from other courses such as Project Management and Database Management to the case study. Based on this experience, I learned the technique of applying what I had studied to my work related project.*

*Terry Wong, CGA Student, The Oppenheimer Group, British Columbia*

## Appendix A

### SAIT DFS Practicum Agreement

Each student in DFS must have a completed practicum agreement on file for both of their DFS courses. Please fill out and return this form as soon as possible once your employment is confirmed for your DFS term. At the latest, the form must be returned within one week of the course start date.

Please fill in the top section of the agreement with your name and student id, the company you are working for and the dates of your work term. The program of study should be Bachelor of Applied Business Administration degree and DF1 or DF2 (e.g. BADM – DF1).

This agreement is designed for students completing their DFS at their permanent place of employment. The agreement should be dated using the start date and end date of your DFS course. If you are doing DFS 1 and DFS 2 in succession, you can fill in the dates for both courses, and only have one form signed. If you are in a temporary position only, please put the dates of your actual start and end dates. The start date should not be before your course starts, and the end date should not be after the end date.

Please note that the practicum agreement is used in many SAIT programs and some sections do not apply to the DFS distance courses. Please review the following notes and exceptions:

1. In section 2, the agreement states that the company will allow a SAIT instructor to visit the student at the facilities. We are not doing site visits in the distance Bachelor of Applied Business Administration program.
2. In section 6c, please understand that if the agreement is terminated by SAIT, it would only affect the student's enrollment in the DFS course, not their employment at the company.

You need to sign the bottom student section and have your employer sign in the company section. ***Your form must have a witness to your signature – please ensure that you have the witness section signed.*** Then please return the agreement via fax or email to have it signed by a SAIT official.

**Please return to:**  
**ATTN: Kimberly Jones, fax (403) 284-7086**

You can also scan the signed form and return it by email to [cga-saitdegree@sait.ca](mailto:cga-saitdegree@sait.ca).

If you or your employers have any questions about this practicum agreement, please contact the DFS Coordinator, Tracey Bosch ([tracey.bosch@sait.ca](mailto:tracey.bosch@sait.ca)).