

Versatile AAT – Kathy Chow***Laying the
groundwork for future
achievements***

Before going down a particular career path and striving for success, it is important to be ready for the challenges that the long and winding road may bring. Kathy Chow, AAT graduate and auditor at James T. W. Kong & Co CPAs, shares with us her experience and observations on what it means to be ready.

Choosing the option most suited for yourself

There was nothing unusual to mark the start of Kathy's career in accounting. Like many, she started studying accounting when she was still in secondary school. She decided to pursue further studies and a possible career in accounting primarily because she was drawn to the professional aspect of this choice, as well as the fact that such a career path appeared relatively clear and straightforward.

Kathy completely understands that having a professional qualification is a prerequisite for long-term development in the accountancy profession. After some research and comparing different accounting qualifications, Kathy decided to go for AAT since it mostly suited her educational background and career goal. As a working person who entered the labour market immediately

after completing secondary education, high flexibility and no specific training being required in advance were her major concerns: AAT fulfilled her needs. She also appreciates the availability of an articulation pathway to the Qualification Programme (QP), even for those like her without an undergraduate degree.

Applying technical knowledge at work

Kathy started off as an accountant at James T. W. Kong & Co CPA. "I think it is vital that accounting personnel should start from the basics," Kathy recalls. According to Kathy, working as an accountant allowed her to acquire crucial experience in basic accounting work, as well as to learn much regarding clients' common needs and mistakes. This experience serves as an important foundation for work later on in any specific field.

When Kathy completed the AAT Examination in 2010, there was a chance for her to shift to auditing. Being an auditor can be a very different matter from being an accountant. Kathy's daily work as an auditor now involves a wide range of responsibilities, from drafting reports for superiors' review, to providing on-site services to major clients. Being able to fulfill these obligations regularly

requires deep knowledge in accounting concepts, and Kathy credits her studies for the AAT qualification as a main reason for her being able to adapt to such work with ease.

Kathy thinks that strong theoretical knowledge in areas such as taxation and auditing procedures cannot be acquired merely through work; some formal training is also required. By studying for the AAT Exam, Kathy gained a lot in these areas and this study prepared her well for the challenges of her new position. In addition, her studies for subjects such as Paper 2 “Business Communication and Organization and Management” and Paper 1 “Accounting and Computerized Accounts” were essential in helping her develop her professional capacity, as they improved her language and communication skills in dealing with clients and her fluency in using accounting software. These are indispensable skills for anyone wanting to thrive as an accounting professional.

Prudent time management skills

Given today’s competitive market, in which most prospective employees are graduates with bachelors’ degrees in accounting, it is crucial to keep abreast of the latest standards and procedures by taking courses and exams and attaining further qualifications. Kathy said she is no exception. “It can be tough having to study part time, but having an encouraging employer really helps a lot,” she says. She feels lucky that her superiors are supportive of her studies by being generous with study leave for her preparations for exams.

Another important point, in Kathy’s experience, is prudent time management. “In my opinion, it’s not always possible to cram at the last minute, especially once you’ve reached an advanced level of studies such as Professional Bridging Examination,” she observes. Therefore, Kathy believes that being able to follow your work and study schedule efficiently and effectively is the key to success.

In terms of exam technique, Kathy recommends practicing with past papers. “The questions in these papers are quite up-to-date, and sometimes contain current events which impact on the practice of accounting,” she says.

A versatile young talent

Currently, Kathy is pursuing a Bachelor of Laws degree. She believes that she should broaden her scope of studies and professional interest as early as possible as it becomes more difficult to begin studies in a different field when further along a career path. She thinks that her knowledge and background in accounting is highly complementary to related legal subjects such as taxation and business law. In addition, she believes that obtaining a law degree will allow her to keep her options open for the future both within and outside of the accounting arena, affording her opportunities in related fields such as company secretarial or other law-related work.

Kathy also aims to complete the QP in the near future. After being qualified, she will weigh her options and opportunities and decide on a career path most suitable for herself, be it in the commercial world, law-related work, or within the realm of accounting. Whatever her choice may be, Kathy stresses the importance of equipping herself with the necessary knowledge and qualification before embarking on this journey. “The first step has to be getting myself ready for the challenges ahead,” she says. “It is crucial that I equip myself well before making any final decisions.”

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Kathy Chow’s study and career path

2007	Matriculate graduation
2007-10	Accountant at James T. W. Kong & Co CPAs
2008-10	Completed AAT Examination (exempt from one paper)
2010-11	Completed PBE
2010-present	Auditor at James T. W. Kong & Co CPAs
2011-present	Studying Bachelor of Laws at London University
current	Student of Hong Kong Institute of CPAs’ QP