

Accounting Technician Examination

Feature Interview: Ms. Joan Lam

Elbert Lee



Joan Lam completed the Accounting Technician Examinations in 2005 and became a member of the HKIAAT in 2006. She speaks to T/Dialogue about her experiences with the examinations and how passing them has helped her career development.

Why did you choose accountancy as your career?

I began my work life as an "office boy", later becoming a shipping and accounts clerk and working in a shipping department. The idea of working in the accounting field came from my senior colleagues where I used to work. I had no idea what I

was doing as I was only a Form 5 certificate holder then. So, I started taking accounting courses part time.

Describe your current position and job duties.

I am now working at a CPA firm as a secretary. My work duties involve accounting, administrative and company secretarial work.

What academic training did you receive before you studying for the HKIAAT examinations?

I had also taken certificate and higher diploma courses in accounting offered by the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE). Some of these courses are HKIAAT accredited so I was able to use them to claim exemptions.

Are you taking any other courses now?

I have recently completed my B.A. (Honours) in accounting and finance at Leeds Metropolitan University. It took me about one-and-a-half years to complete this course. At present, I am taking Putonghua and management courses.

Why did you decide to pursue the HKIAAT qualifications?

I felt that the courses I had taken were not enough to prepare me for the demands of the real business environment. I decided to study for the HKIAAT qualification as it seemed to me that these courses were able to reflect the actual needs of the business world.

You mentioned claiming exemptions from the examinations: which ones did you get and how long did you take to complete all the examinations?

Altogether I was able to claim exemptions from five papers based on the courses that I took at IVE, and sat three ATE papers. It took me about one-and-a-half years to complete the three exams.

How do you find the HKIAAT syllabus helps you in your day-to-day work?

It is very practical and very useful. Company law knowledge definitely comes handy when I do my company secretarial work now; I also find my taxation knowledge useful. The great thing about the HKIAAT

is that it offers a package of courses that are well tied together, and that reflects the knowledge required for any business to run smoothly today.

What was studying for the examinations like?

It took me a long time, studying part-time, to obtain the HKIAAT qualification. But I was really happy when I passed. I remember I nearly broke out in tears when I found that I had passed the law exam, and at my first attempt! Looking back, I don't think the ATE was any easier than other types of exams as I had to study equally hard for them. But I do think they may have a better and a more reasonable way to gauge a student's knowledge in a field.

Do you find the HKIAAT qualification helps your career development?

Definitely. The HKIAAT qualification is well recognized in the business field for its professionalism. It is very popular and employers understand what it entails. With this qualification you can easily switch career paths, say, from an accounting job to administration or company secretarial work. It can benefit you as much as it can benefit your employer because of the flexibility of the programme's design.

Do you find your membership of the HKIAAT useful?

Yes. Although I have not been an active member until now because I have been busy with other things, I will get more involved soon by taking CPD courses to keep up-to-date with the latest developments. The fact this is a membership requirement makes good professional sense.

How do you see the HKIAAT qualification in the context of a student's career?

It is very important. This is your first professional step into the field, especially if you do not have a university degree or if you only have Form 5 or Form 7 qualifications. It is your gateway into a professional arena and for many of us this may be the only path.

What's your career plan?

At this stage, I do not have any fixed plans in mind. I am still trying to gain more field experience at the audit firm in which I work. I may study for a Master's degree later on and specialize in company secretarial work and/or auditing.

Finally, will you recommend that your colleagues or friends take the HKIAAT examinations?

I am already doing that! I keep on telling my friends at IVE to take HKIAAT exams. They do not know what they will be missing if they don't do this! It would be such a waste of effort spending so much time studying accounting and not getting the proper professional qualifications. This is especially true for those who take evening courses in accounting, since these courses are often seen as less rigorous because they do not involve exams. These students should take the HKIAAT exams or try to become members. This will certainly help them when they want to get a job.

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