



## Versatile AAT Oscar Lee

**Pioneer AAT graduate -**  
from an uncut gem to a sparkling educator

*Education has long been admired as a great career to be in because knowledge transfer is the fundamental driving force behind an economy's development. Our Versatile AAT in this issue, Oscar Lee, moved into the education field after working as an accountant. "Changing my career was one of the biggest decisions I ever made – but definitely a worthwhile one since it's a very meaningful job," he says. He currently teaches accounting courses at YMCA College of Continuing Education, is grateful for the chance to pass accounting knowledge to today's young people.*

**By Aldric Chau**

**T**his AAT-turned-lecturer has seen himself go through various changes after taking the exams. With very basic accounting training, it was at first quite hard for Lee to find a stable accounting job. By attaining the AAT qualification, he solidified his knowledge and shortly after getting qualified he was employed by a CPA firm. After many years' experience at the firm he decided to become a lecturer.

### Benefits that count

Lee thinks that having the AAT qualification was what made his employers realize the extent of his knowledge. The AAT qualification trains up accounting technicians who know how to perform accounting operations well, who know the basics of other important areas such as law, audit and taxation, as well as working on students' soft skills and critical thinking.

Many people see part-time study as a challenge. Lee sees it differently and advises students to take this route. "Studying part-time gives you the chance to put your knowledge into action, catalyzing the assimilation of knowledge learnt." He also believes that studying for the

AAT exams can be the first point on a path to success. “The fact that many business leaders or senior management come with an accounting background suggests that an AAT can look forward to a fruitful future,” Lee remarks.

Among all subjects covered in AAT examinations, Lee finds taxation to be the most practical. Since taxation is an integral part of every economy, the taxation examination paper walks students through this highly specialised knowledge. “The taxation part of the AAT examinations is all about the organization and employment of a massive amount of data. This perfects your logical thinking, which can help you solve many problems at work,” says Lee. He suggests students be more aware of what’s happening around the world since accounting professionals always rely on information, data and regulations to finish tasks. During his leisure time Lee reads extensively. His reading includes finance and law-related journals which he says give valuable input to his work.

Another highlight of AAT examinations that impresses Lee a lot is the coherence between different subjects. Different areas, such as accounting, auditing and law are made co-related so that a student can move between them at ease, with no prior knowledge.

#### A transforming qualification

In over 20 years, the HKIAAT has benefitted more than 8,000 graduates, helping them accomplish their mission of developing an accounting career. As the business world has changed over the years, so has the exam syllabus and expectations of candidates. However, the high quality of AATs has never changed.

As he has been overseeing the Diploma Programme in Accounting Studies and meeting students for years, Lee knows better than anyone about the metamorphoses which the AAT qualification has gone through. He says that the examination syllabus has seen some of the biggest changes. “The syllabus has been refined to cover more localised topics, including real scenarios in the local business environment, making it more relevant for students’ studies. It is now more concerned with

market needs. For instance, computers and systems are indispensable in today’s accounting operations, so IT has been introduced to the AAT examinations to make sure students can master accounting and related software and handle data mining jobs. These changes bring a much wider recognition of the qualification, which affects the success rate of AAT graduates in winning employment.”

#### Hints for success

When asked about the study tips, the accounting lecturer says knowledge application should be every student’s priority. “Since the AAT examinations are practical, you need to demonstrate that you are capable of applying textbook knowledge to different cases,” he says. He recommends that students consider every theory and skill learnt from class, and then apply them all at work and observe the difference in their performance.

He also emphasizes that the eight subjects in the syllabus are only the core fabric of an accounting base. “Students have to develop their own experience, learning and application so that they could leverage all the skills they gain. Learning transferrable and technical skills and practising them at work are equally important in shaping an AAT’s future.”

Another hint for success is to do with attitude. Since the road to success in accounting is not flat, Lee encourages students to be patient. The AAT qualification may well be the start of the journey – students need to accumulate work experience, practise what they have learnt and gain exposure in different areas of accounting. He believes that passion is the source of patience. If your interest is strong enough, Lee is convinced you can make it over the time.

Looking ahead, Lee plans to continue to groom more potential AATs and other accounting personnel and will take a masters degree in education to improve his teaching skills. “I want to continue to enhance the quality of accounting students in Hong Kong, exerting positive influence on the city’s development,” he concludes. **T/D**