



Versatile AAT



Athena Wong

Title: Accounting officer

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Reflecting on her transition from a secondary school graduate to an accredited accounting technician (AAT), Athena talks to us about how qualifying with the HKIAAT has transformed her career and how the qualification has added spice to different stages of her life.

What is your current position and what are your job duties?

I have been with the company for three years and I am currently in a mid-level accounting position as an accounting officer. My core job duties include liaison with external parties on accounting-related issues. These external parties, such as property owners, tenants, developers and related government organisations, affect our business in varied ways. Every month I have to prepare a full set of accounting documents such as the income statement and balance sheet.

Why did you choose accountancy as your career?

Eight years ago, right after completing my secondary education, I happened to find an accounting job. At the same time, I took up a Diploma in Accounting Studies course at Hong Kong School of Commerce in order to learn more about accounting. Along the way I developed a deeper interest in the profession. That's when I first found out about the AAT qualification.

Another reason why I have been working in the accounting sector all these years is that I am basically a number person. I enjoy dealing with figures. As clients always have lots of questions about complicated accounting documents, I take the initiative in answering their questions and explaining the figures and rules. Giving them a clear picture of how the formulae work and why figures turn out to be positive or negative gives me huge job satisfaction. It motivates me to improve my skills and career.

How long did it take you to finish the AAT exams?

I finished all eight papers of the AAT exams in around seven years. But don't be startled – I took a break of four years in the middle! In fact this flexibility is a remarkable feature of the AAT qualification, allowing part-time students to fix a schedule that suits their working hours and learning pace. I believe that's what life-long learning is all about.



I could have finished the exams in a much shorter period of time had I claimed exemptions from four AAT exam papers from the diploma course. However, my mentors advised me that taking all the exams would give me a more concrete foundation, better preparing me for future endeavours in pursuing professional qualification. In retrospect, I am convinced I made the right decision to sit for all of the AAT examination papers.

How do you find the knowledge and skills covered in AAT qualification applies in your day-to-day work?

There are many subjects covered in the AAT exams that are highly relevant to my work today. The most significant one was law. Before taking the law paper, I knew nothing about the law and was awkward whenever I came across law-related issues at work. This subject's content, which was at an appropriate level for beginners, gave me a sound basic understanding of business law and common practice. This in turn helped me explore the area of work in auditing. I now feel much more confident when talking about law related issues with auditing colleagues.

Having been working for about eight years, I realize that soft skills are as valuable as technical knowledge for an accounting personnel. The AAT exams include the subject business communication. I learnt about certain basics of good communication such as how a decent business e-mail should be drafted, and how negotiations with various parties can be best done to achieve a win-win situation. All these skills are not only useful for accounting professionals but indeed for most careers.

How do you find the AAT qualification helps in your job?

It is helpful not just in terms of the knowledge I have gained, but also the opportunities available to me after finishing all the examinations. There is a clearly visible difference in my opportunities at workplace: I am now assigned more complicated tasks related to auditing, as colleagues believe that I am more capable than before in handling such tasks. The trust that I have gained from colleagues and supervisors is far more important to me than short-term salary rises or promotions.

Do you have any advice for students taking the AAT exams?

In taking AAT exams part-time, you will also need to strike a right balance between work and study. Time management is top priority concern. For me I gave up much social commitment during weekends in order to study for the exams.

Would you recommend your colleagues/friends to take HKIAAT examinations? Why?

I would definitely recommend friends interested in developing accounting career or knowhow to make this very first step in exploring the profession. It is a process through which you will be guided to acquire the essential knowledge step by step.