

Advice from a faculty member

Attaining a professional qualification and setting a clear career goal



William Lee
 Senior Lecturer
 Division of Business (Accounting)
 Hong Kong College of Technology

Developing a bright future requires a clear vision of oneself. William Lee believes once you have set a career goal, a professional qualification is essential to pave the way towards a brighter future. He talks to us about his work and teaching experience and gives his thoughts on the accountancy profession.

How do you start your career in the education sector?

After graduating from university, I worked in a trading company for 18 years, working my way up to become a finance and administration manager. During that time, I taught at educational institutions on subjects related to the HKIAAT examinations on a part-time basis. I enjoyed the sense of achievement that comes with sharing knowledge and developed a strong motivation to pursue a career in education. Therefore, after accumulating experience from my part-time teaching, I decided to move into education in 2005, and have been a lecturer at Hong Kong College of Technology for five years. I am now teaching the Higher Diploma in Accounting and Higher Diploma in Accounting (with Banking) programmes. In addition to teaching, I also handle administration work at the college.

How did you apply your commercial expertise to your current teaching role?

When I first started as a lecturer, I realized that many students lack real-life experience. I therefore always illustrate the concepts with examples and real financial reports. I also make sure students are kept up-to-date with the latest accounting news and standards. I hope they can learn some other real-life examples in addition to the examples they can get from their textbooks.

What teaching methods do you use to make learning effective?

I use group exercises in class to let students discuss issues. Students can visit me on a one-to-one basis during consultation hours and I am pleased to share my experience and give them advice on their studies and careers. In addition, I encourage students to apply their knowledge by participating in large-scale competitions such as the HKIAAT Accounting and Business Management Case Competition. This helps in enhancing students' time management and problem-solving skills.



What are your views on the AAT qualification?

In my view, it is essential to obtain a professional qualification like the AAT qualification. Many of our graduates will apply for exemptions from AAT Examination papers, enroll in the examinations and then join the membership of HKIAAT after graduation. For those who choose not to develop their career in the commercial sector, a well-recognized qualification can open doors to academia too, especially for teachers or lecturers in accounting subjects.

The similarity of the examination mode for AAT Examination and Professional Bridging Examination (PBE), such as choices of papers, syllabus coverage, examination timetable, has led to an increasing number of students pursuing the AAT qualification and PBE as a promising route in preparing to become a professional qualified accountant.

What paths do your students take after graduation?

Some students continue to climb up the professional ladder by taking AAT Examination and then PBE; some pursue the top-up degree. It is also very encouraging to see some of our graduates go on to finish the Hong Kong Institute of CPA's qualification programme, heading towards the CPA designation.

What expectations do you have of your students?

I hope that they can successfully finish and graduate from the three year programme. They should then work to attain a professional qualification, like the AAT qualification. I encourage those who do not have a clear goal yet to try to make up their minds by their second year of study, so they can focus on their studies fully in their final years.

What trends do you see in accounting? Do you have any tips for students who plan a career in accounting?

Accounting continues to be a vital part of all industries. I recommend that students should keep an open mind and explore the accounting system in China because I can foresee a strong potential growth in demand for accounting professionals in mainland.