

Advice from a veteran teacher **Setting clear study and career targets**

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Kenneth Wong, a former insurance claim specialist who is now working his thirteenth year in IVE (Kwun Tong), talks to us about his interesting past occupation, his views on the AAT qualification and his personal tips for success.

Tell us about your study and career background.

I obtained my first degree in accountancy from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University; my postgraduate studies were for a master in business administration from the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom.

Before joining IVE (Kwun Tong) as a teacher, I had been working with an insurance loss adjusting firm for seven years, where I was responsible for insurance claim investigation and loss adjusting. Interestingly, many people immediately associate this role with detective investigation and forensic evidence; indeed this job requires the application of many different accounting skills. For example, in a fire claim, whether fraud is suspected or not, records are generally destroyed. Under such circumstances, one has to make cross-references with whatever records remain and deploy accounting insight to verify the claim.

What made you move into teaching? Do your commercial experiences help?

I love teaching very much and I like to get along with students. I joined IVE (Kwun Tong) in 1998. Last year, I taught management accounting and finance, and supervised final year students' projects. My commercial experiences, especially dramatic investigation episodes, help arouse students' interest and motivation.

On top of my teaching duties, I also hold various administrative positions in IVE (Kwun Tong); for example, I am the campus course coordinator, and the deputy chairman for the campus committee on examination and timetabling.

What is your teaching motto?

Each student has different abilities and I teach them according to their capabilities. Some students had never studied accounting before joining IVE, so I have to be patient and supportive, and give them extra tutorials. If students are already familiar with the subject, I give them more challenging questions to boost their ability.

How well are your students doing?

My students' performance is generally good. A recent example is Lau Ngai Fai -- he was the top student in Paper 6 "Fundamentals of Business Law" in the AAT Examination and was also one of the champion team members in the Accounting and Business Management Case Competition 2010-11 organized by HKIAAT. He has just been admitted to the Hong Kong Polytechnic University via non-JUPAS to study the accountancy degree programme. This kind of excellent performance is due to the good motivation of the students and among their peers. Most of them have a clear vision of their study and career paths and are determined to work hard to achieve these goals.

What is your view about the AAT qualification?

AAT is a qualification which merits great respect and recognition in Hong Kong. It is tailored for the Hong Kong market and has an excellent local touch. Around 30-50 percent of our programmes' graduates will continue with degree studies. But AAT provides an excellent alternative articulation pathway for students who are not going to pursue a degree to become an accounting professional, even to achieve the certified public accountant designation. I would therefore encourage my students to equip themselves with the AAT qualification.

What is your advice for accounting students in Hong Kong?

Being a successful accounting professional requires several qualities: self-discipline, hard work, continuous development and integrity. The first three elements are self-explanatory, but these days many students also understate the importance of integrity. In many professions, especially in accountancy, integrity and ethics are essential and they are not negotiable, nor can they be adjusted case-by-case or client-by-client.

Last but not least, I would encourage students to take an internship or part time experience early. They can even participate in some voluntary work. This gives them a sense of the working world and can help them develop valuable connections.

