

**Versatile AAT****Balancing career and studies with ease**

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With First Class Honours in her bachelor's degree and top marks in one of the Professional Bridging Examination (PBE) papers, Melissa has handled her academic challenges with ease. She talks to us about her reasons for taking the AAT Examination and PBE, and shares the secrets of her study strategies.

***You graduated with a degree in hotel management. What inspired you to embark on a career in accounting?***

I worked in the accounting department of a renowned hotel in Hong Kong for my internship during my university studies. As you can imagine, running a hotel requires dedicated staff working around the clock and many of my colleagues, particularly the frontline staff, had relatively unstable work schedules. I preferred a more stable working environment, and the accounting department was able to accommodate that. In addition, the career progression for accounting staff was more clearly defined, and I knew that I could achieve my career goals easily as long as I worked hard and attained a professional accounting qualification.

***What are the responsibilities at your current position?***

There are around 30 people in my department altogether, and 12 people in my team. I am in charge of customer accounts so I have to handle customer invoices on a daily basis. In addition, I have to answer customer enquiries about their invoices should they arise. With so many customers coming and leaving our hotel each day, it really requires a lot of patience to make sure the finances are on track!

***Why did you decide to take the AAT Examination and PBE?***

I chose to do the examinations instead of an accounting degree as it would be more flexible in terms of time. I could plan when to take the examinations and study in my own time. If I were to fail an examination I could always take the paper again. This would not be the case for a degree – if I were to fail a course, I would have to take the degree all over again. In a way,

taking the examinations seems like a less stressful way to achieve my goal of joining the HKICPA's Qualification Programme (QP), and its flexibility meant I could maintain my work schedule.

Passing my AAT Examination and PBE reassured my employer that I possessed the requisite knowledge for my job. When I was doing my job during my internship, my supervisor was unsure whether I knew enough to shoulder my responsibilities as I had yet started studying for the HKIAAT examinations. However, my current supervisor is very supportive of my studies since the knowledge and skills I have gained are useful in my work. He even gave me tips on preparing for examinations.

### ***How did taking the examinations help you with your everyday work?***

I found most of the papers quite useful for my work. The AAT Examination Paper 7 "Financial Accounting", for example, was useful as it related directly to my daily duties. Studying for the papers definitely supplemented the knowledge I gained from work, as I was able to learn more about the theoretical background of accounting processes. I definitely understood more about what I was doing instead of following procedures blindly.

A funny anecdote relating to my studies for the examinations is that I was once able to apply my knowledge to my daily life. I had a dispute with my mobile service provider and was able to argue my case with success using knowledge I had learnt from my studies for the AAT Examination Paper 6 "Fundamentals of Business Law"!

### ***You scored top marks in the PBE Paper IV. Do you have any study tips to share with other students?***

I studied by myself for all the examinations. I don't really have any tricks per se – I usually looked over the past papers first to familiarize myself with the syllabus, and then studied the relevant textbooks and guide books. I was lucky in that my colleagues were willing to help out when I needed time to study. Whenever I had to take time off for studying or to take the examinations, my colleagues were ready to jump in and lend a hand with my work duties.

### ***What plans do you have for your career?***

I am taking the HKICPA Qualification Programme (QP) now. I received a scholarship for my QP, which stipulates that I have to finish all my examinations in two years. Hopefully, I will be able to fulfill that goal, but I am taking everything in my stride. In terms of career, I think I will stay in the hotel business for the foreseeable future. After all, it is an industry I enjoy working in, and there are still many things I have to learn!

**Melissa Mui's study and career path**

2010 – 2012	Bachelor of Science in Hotel Management from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
2012 – Present	Accounts Clerk at InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong
2011 – 2012	Completed AAT Examination
2013	Completed PBE (Top Student of Paper IV Business Law and Taxation in December 2013 session)
Present	Student in the HKICPA Qualification Programme