

*Employer in the spotlight***Checking all the right boxes**

**Name:** Kelvin Tong  
**Title:** Finance Manager  
**Company:** InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong

As an employer, Kelvin constantly looks out for candidates with a solid and comprehensive foundation in accounting. He explains to us why AAT graduates fulfill his criteria with flying colours.

***What does your role as Finance Manager entail?***

I lead an accounting team of 12 people, and I report to the Financial Controller. Our team has to handle various accounting duties on a daily basis, including keeping track of accounts receivable and payable, arranging payments to suppliers, managing costs and performing income audit work. In addition, we work on managing company cash flows and budgeting. As you might imagine, many financial issues arise in a hotel every day, and our team has a vital role to play in ensuring that the whole hotel operation runs smoothly and efficiently.

***What qualities does Melissa possess that particularly impress you?***

Melissa is diligent, attentive to detail and enthusiastic about her work – all qualities that I look for in potential candidates. She also has a very good memory, which is a useful skill to have in our line of work. She stands out in our team as our first AAT graduate, and the knowledge she gained from her examination studies shines through in her work, as she has all-round skills in accounting, auditing and financial management.

What especially impressed me about Melissa was her solid foundation in accounting concepts. It is easy to simply follow established protocols in accounting without questioning the reasoning behind the different processes. However Melissa understands the ideas behind each step taken in her work. Her presentation skills are also outstanding, and we are lucky to have her with us.

***Do you think the AAT examinations equip graduates with the technical knowledge and skills necessary for accounting work?***

Definitely. AAT graduates receive practical training that is tailor-made to the specific needs of accounting work. In the past, we have had candidates come to us with various backgrounds and qualifications. This certainly adds diversity to our team, but their accounting skills might not be comprehensive enough for the range of work we perform every day. We can see that AAT graduates possess an all-round skill-set that allows them to manage our work efficiently.

***What are your views on professional qualifications for accounting personnel? Do you think professional qualifications help accounting personnel to progress on the career ladder?***

Unlike other industries with a relatively low barrier of entry, accounting is a profession that requires professional training and qualifications. This might mean a tougher beginning for recent accounting graduates, but the process of achieving professional qualifications equips candidates with the skills necessary for a successful career. Our company is fully supportive of our staff in this respect, and we always encourage them to further their professional qualifications.

***As an employer, what qualities do you look for in candidates, especially for the hospitality industry?***

The hotel business is a very interesting and challenging one for accounting professionals. We tend to look for candidates with a thorough grounding in accounting, internal control and auditing, and who are able to adhere to different control procedures set out by the department. This is why AAT graduates are a good fit for our environment: not only do they hold a solid grounding in different aspects of accounting, they are often good with time-management and are disciplined enough to face the multiple challenges we get each day.

***Do you have any advice for students or graduates planning their future studies and career in accounting?***

My advice would be to complete all the professional examinations as quickly as possible, since it is easier to find time to study when you are still young and have fewer family obligations. After passing the professional examinations, you have more time and energy to develop your career. I would also encourage graduates to consider studying for a discipline other than accounting. As we progress in our career, we encounter challenges that might require knowledge from other disciplines. I would say, learning is a lifelong pursuit!