

Versatile AAT**A direct route to success**

Name: Alvin Chow
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Company: AECOM

Having passed all four papers of the Professional Bridging Examination (PBE) in one go, Alvin is finding the AAT Examination and PBE a quick and effective way to realize his accounting dreams.

What are your duties in your current position?

My current position requires me to have all-round skills. My team deals mainly with the payroll and tax matters of the whole organization. Every day, aside from preparing documents, I have to answer email enquiries and to take up managerial duties. This is quite different from my first job, which was at a CPA firm. There I worked in a team dealing with taxes, but my work was much more specialized. Both types of work present a specific set of challenges, and I believe that the experience that I gained in the past and at my current company is very helpful to my career development.

You took all four PBE papers in one go – how did you prepare for the examination?

I was still working for my previous employer when I took the examination, and fortunately I had two weeks of study leave to prepare for the examination. My previous working hours were quite long and strenuous, so I could only make use of my spare time as best as I could to work on past papers and to study. I was determined to take all four papers in one go because I wanted to move on to HKICPA's Qualification Programme (QP) as quickly as possible. I count myself lucky to be able to pass all four papers at the same time and even got the Top Student award for Paper IV!

How did you learn about the AAT Examination and PBE, and what led you to decide to take them?

I first learnt about the examinations from alumni and teachers at my institute. After graduating with an associate degree in accounting, I took a bachelor's degree in business management since I wanted to broaden my knowledge base. At the same time, as I was working in a CPA firm, my teachers recommended that I take the AAT Examination and PBE as a way to attain a professional accounting qualification quickly and effectively. I was able to apply for full exemption from the AAT Examination because of my associate degree. I took only half a year,

i.e. one examination session, to bridge to the QP since I managed to pass all four PBE papers in one sitting. This meant I was able to start my QP studies much faster than if I had taken a top-up accounting degree programme.

Have the examinations been helpful for your current work?

Definitely. The PBE papers are very practical so that the knowledge gained from studying for them can be fully employed in work. They offered a lot of insight into the real life day-to-day work of professional accountants. When I was working in a CPA firm, my studies for Paper IV "PBE Business Law and Taxation" helped a lot in handling taxation matters. Now, I put much of the auditing knowledge from Paper III "PBE Auditing and Information Systems" into practice.

Furthermore, taking professional examinations has proved to my employers that I am enthusiastic about my work and about the accounting field. They have shown great interest in my advancement - in fact this was one of the topics discussed during the interview for my current position.

What are your plans for the future?

I aim to finish the QP by next year. The AAT Examination and PBE have been a great help towards studying for the QP, despite the format being different. I found that I was able to answer most PBE questions by following a broad structure, but I am still adjusting to the different requirements of the QP papers. I think accounting is a stable profession with lots of room for career progression, and I am simply looking forward to what's to come.

Alvin Chow's study and career path

2005 – 2007	Associate of Business Administration (Accountancy) from City University of Hong Kong Community College
2008 – 2011	Bachelor of Business Administration in Business Management from City University of Hong Kong
2007 – 2012	Accounts Assistant at Ernst and Young Tax Services Ltd.
2011	Completed AAT Examination with full exemption
2011	Completed all four papers of PBE in one examination session (Top Student in Paper IV "PBE Business Law and Taxation" in the June 2011 session)
2012 – present	Assistant Accountant at AECOM
Present	Student of the HKICPA Qualification Programme