



Versatile AAT
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In this issue, Ms. Candy Lo talks about how her life and career changed after attaining the AAT qualification.

Tell us about your current position and duties.

I have been working in my present company, Yulan International Co. Ltd, for around one and a half years. My duties include preparing a full set of company accounts as well as handling different payments in and out on a daily basis. This is my second job. Before this, I had worked for a university as a computing research assistant for half a year – a field which is totally unrelated to accounting.

How and why did you change your field?

I graduated with a bachelor degree in computing from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. During my undergraduate study, I had the opportunity to take business accounting as an elective. This was the first time I learned about accounting and I found it really interesting. Then I started to take the AAT examination preparatory courses during my Year 2 and 3 undergraduate studies.

After graduation, I started to prepare to take the AAT examinations. At my first attempt I took four AAT examination papers in one diet, but I found it very demanding. I attempted Paper 5 “Hong Kong Taxation” and Paper 8 “Auditing” twice. I am pleased that I have eventually passed all the AAT papers.

Why did you choose to pursue the AAT qualification?

I think the AAT qualification is the best accounting qualification for beginners. It uses an orderly and gradual approach. I can see the logic and rationale behind it, which is to lay a solid and practical foundation for newcomers to accounting. After attaining the AAT qualification, you are equipped with the basic accounting know-how that is required in most elementary accounting jobs. That was exactly what I wanted. And, of equal importance, there is a clear progression pathway provided for AAT graduates.

What have you gained from your studies for the AAT examinations?

When I brought back the knowledge I had gained from my studies for the AAT examinations and applied them to real-life scenarios in my job, I found myself understanding the accounting concepts more thoroughly. Before I took the AAT examination, I thought accounting was nothing more than a record of payments in and



out. But now, I know that having a properly and professionally prepared set of accounts brings enormous benefits to a company, such as those related to tax issues and governance. In particular, after I finished Paper 7 “Advanced Accounting” I found myself almost free from committing errors which had been dogging me in the past.

Out of your various duties, what is the most challenging but fulfilling task?

From time to time, I also have to check and verify accounting entries and expenses, and sometimes I must chase the overdue payments. The verification and money chasing require certain people skills. I have to put my questions skilfully so as not to spoil the relationship built between the company and customers.

And now, you are taking the Professional Bridging Examination (PBE). What are the differences between these studies and those for the AAT examinations?

I have already finished PBE Paper I & II. In terms of practicality, PBE is highly relevant to every accounting personnel. In terms of difficulty, the concepts involved in PBE are much more sophisticated than those presented in the AAT examinations. I have to spend much more time understanding them. My study tip is to even out the time you spend preparing for the examination; do not burn the midnight oil only at the very last minute. It simply does not work. Getting through is all about persistence!

What are your career aspirations?

I wanted to complete PBE Paper III & IV this coming December. Then I would like to continue and study for the Qualification Programme (QP) of the Hong Kong Institute of CPAs. Hopefully, I can take one and a half years to complete and then qualify as a CPA after another 1-2 years.

What is your advice for AAT students?

Try to appreciate the logic and rationale behind each of the papers, and schedule the pace at which you tackle the examinations in accordance with your ability. Do not set your sights unrealistically high. It is better to get a strong hold of the concepts rather than skimming them in haste.

Last but not least, can you summarize the strengths of the AAT qualification?

The skills you gain from your studies are highly practical and recognizable, all well-suited to the needs of our business. In my case, the AAT study route is an excellent pathway for entering the accounting profession.

Candy’s career and study path:

Graduated from Hong Kong Polytechnic University BA(Hons) in Computing	2007
Undertook Accredited Technician Examination (ATE)	12/2007 – 12/2008
Research Assistant in Computing – Hong Kong Polytechnic University	2007 (half year)
Accounting Assistant - Yulan International Co. Ltd	2008 - current