



Versatile AAT

Written by Foster Yim



Name: Dennis Chan

Title: Accounts Clerk

Company: A non-government organization (NGO)

How does the AAT qualification help your career advancement?

Dennis Chan, who worked in government departments for six years, successfully changed his field of work in the midst of his career with the help of the AAT qualification. He talks about how he achieved this and tells us how the AAT qualification can save time in his degree studies.

Tell us something about your academic background and career path.

After graduating from Form Five, I studied the Diploma in Accounting Studies (Professional Accounting) in the YMCA College of Careers. I joined the government afterwards, serving in the Labour Department and the Leisure & Cultural Service Department as clerical assistant for six years in total. Then I worked in a trading company as an accounts clerk for two years before I joined my current organization. In the meantime, I am studying for a part-time degree from the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK).

Was the nature of your work in the government different from your current role?

Yes. I was mainly responsible for clerical and coordination work when I was in the government. Taking my duties in Leisure & Cultural Service Department as an example, I needed to organize events for the public and I was in charge of the daily operations and stock taking for an information centre. The work was quite repetitive and routine.

What made you shift to accounting?

It was the AAT qualification! Mathematics was my best subject in high school – I got a credit in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination – and that's why I chose accounting in my subsequent studies. After graduation from the diploma, I joined the government by chance. One of the benefits of working in the government is that it gives good support for employees to continue their studies. I made use of the time to attain the AAT qualification. Since one year's accounting experience is a prerequisite to becoming a member of the HKIAAT, I changed my job in order to fulfil the membership requirement.

In other words, the AAT qualification helped you change to a career you like?

Absolutely! As I said, my work in the government was repetitive to me and I felt that I would have more room for career development if I were an accounting personnel.



But why did you choose HKIAAT as your professional development partner?

The reasons are threefold. Firstly, HKIAAT has an excellent reputation as a professional body. Secondly, studying for the AAT examinations suited my part-time study schedule. And thirdly, most importantly, the AAT examination syllabus is tailor-made for the accounting needs of the business world.

You emphasize the relevancy of the AAT syllabus. Can you give us an example?

Yes, especially from Paper 5 onwards. Papers 1 to 4 focus a lot more on introducing and enhancing the knowledge of fundamental concepts, most of which had been covered in my diploma studies. However Papers 5 to 8, which are about taxation, law, accounting and auditing, are all new to me. The legal terms in Paper 6 “Hong Kong Business Law” became my nightmare! I needed to take this paper twice. Paper 7 “Advanced Accounting” opened up my mind to the broad and sophisticated accounting world – it drilled deep into the accounting concepts which I had thought I understood well. If I did not have the training from studying for these papers, I would not be able to read and interpret financial reports. The AAT qualification, to me, is an entry ticket to the accounting profession. It also provides a common language for me to communicate with other accounting professionals.

Do you think that the AAT qualification is highly recognized by employers?

Yes, I think so. I still remember that when I was interviewed by Jiwa International Limited, even though I had no accounting experience, my boss employed me because of my AAT qualification. One main reason which drives people to pursue a professional qualification is promotion. When I changed job from Jiwa to the current NGO, with my work experience, I got a 15% increase in salary. This is the best evidence to show that the AAT qualification is widely recognized.

Did AAT qualification help you in other aspects?

The AAT qualification also equipped me with a good foundation to pursue a higher academic qualification. I am now taking the BBA (Hons) in Accounting course at the OUHK. I believe the AAT qualification has sharpened my questioning and analysing skills, which help me in my tertiary studies. Also AAT graduates can get a 55 credit exemption out of the 120 credits required for an OUHK degree – almost half of the requirement of a degree programme! This makes it easier for us to get a degree.

Would you recommend the HKIAAT to anyone who wants to embark on an accounting career?

I would recommend it without any hesitation since the AAT qualification brings job opportunities in the accounting profession and paves the route to further academic achievement.



Dennis's career and study path:

Graduated from YMCA College of Careers – Diploma in Accounting Studies (Professional Accounting) (full-time)	2000
Clerical Assistant – Labour Department; Leisure & Cultural Service Department	2000 - 2006
Undertook Accredited Technician Examination	2002 - 2006
Accounts Clerk – Jiwa International Ltd	2006 - 2008
Accounts Clerk – NGO	2009 - current