

Versatile AAT

A flexible way to enhance competitiveness



Name: Jessica Chow
Title: Accounts Clerk
Company: Utopian Computer Systems Limited

Jessica Chow, HKIAAT associate member with a great interest in numbers, has a strong desire to achieve job satisfaction and success, and she chose accounting as a profession to fulfill all these desires. She talks about how she managed her continuous learning in accounting and how her studies for the AAT Examination helped her in tackling daily work issues.

Why did you choose accounting as your career?

There are a few reasons why I decided to choose accounting as a life-long career. My good results in Principles of Accounts at secondary school gave me a great sense of satisfaction, which became a motivation for me to pursue further studies in accounting. Also, I have been gifted with a strong numeracy sense so I thought this was the best way I could fully unleash my potential. The promising opportunities available for accounting personnel irrespective of the economic conditions was another reason.

What are your responsibilities at your current position in Utopian?

When I first joined Utopian, I was only asked to take care of the accounts of one branch. Gradually as I gained more experience and trust from management, I was tasked with a wider scope of work. Currently, apart from handling the full set of accounts for four branches, I am also responsible for month-end stock-taking, monitoring the effectiveness of promotional initiatives and the sales performance of different branches, and generating sales reports. These are important sales intelligence for management to formulate strategies.

Where and how did you learn about the AAT qualification? Why did you decide to undertake the AAT Examination?

I learnt about the AAT qualification from the internet. As a sub-degree holder, I found that attaining the AAT qualification is the best starting point for developing a career in the accounting profession. It could also bring me to the CPA qualification. In comparison with taking a degree programme, AAT Examination was a more economical and flexible option which allowed me to manage my studies according to my own pace. I finally completed the AAT Exam in two years while taking a full-time job.

What have you learnt from the process of preparing for AAT Examination? And how did you apply that to your work?

I gained a wealth of important knowledge from my preparations for the AAT Examination, and this knowledge has enhanced my competitiveness and opened up more opportunities for me. The most useful papers are those related to taxation, auditing and financial accounting. I am able to use the knowledge learned from Paper 5 "Principles of Taxation" to calculate my own salaries tax and the property tax for company. Paper 8 "Principles of Auditing and Management Information Systems" enlightened me about corporate internal control. For instance, when I handled the inventory control of our retail store, I recalled the importance of segregation of duties – so the tasks of stock taking and cross checking are conducted by two colleagues instead of one. Paper 7 "Financial Accounting" rooted me with a good foundation in performing general accounting tasks. From this paper, I learnt how to categorize items and this is essential for preparing accounting reports.

What was the most challenging paper and how did you overcome the challenge?

It goes without saying that Paper 6 "Fundamentals of Business Law" was the most challenging for me. Digesting those long winded business cases was not an easy task. There was a lot of information to be "recited" – although I later realized that they should not be learned by rote but rather through understanding and putting it into practice where appropriate. Raising questions for discussion with study peers was useful in overcoming the complex business law cases.

Do you have any advice for students on their AAT study plans?

The rule of thumb is to set a clear target. If you aim to complete all AAT papers within two years, you should set your priorities and make a realistic study plan. If you are a part-time student, informing your employer about your study plan is a wise move. It not only shows your commitment towards your career, but also helps in seeking their support such as by granting study leave. Forming study groups and practicing past papers are also highly advisable.

What are your future plans for your studies and career?

I plan to finish my remaining two papers in PBE within the coming year and then start the Hong Kong Institute of CPA's Qualification Programme. As for career development, I will continue my career in commercial companies to further advance my technical and soft skills.

Jessica Chow's study and career path

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| 2000 | F5 graduate |
| 2001 | Completed Diploma in Business Studies II at Caritas Institute for Further & Adult Education |
| 2004-07 | Accounts clerk in Super Accounting Limited |
| 2006-08 | Completed eight AAT Examination papers (with exemptions from two papers) |
| 2007-09 | Accounts clerk at Asia Pacific Financial Consultants Limited |
| 2009-current | Accounts clerk at Utopian Computer Systems Limited |

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| 2009-current | Taking PBE |
| 2011-current | Associate member of HKIAAT |

