



**Featured AAT**  
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**Beyond Professional Accountancy**

It is common that people are not sure which field they should go into in the early stage of their career. AAT, a versatile qualification, not only benefits those developing a career in the specialised accountancy profession but is also a fantastic stepping stone for a wide spectrum of roles across industries. Thomas Ng, new member of the HKIAAT, talks about how his AAT qualification has helped him flourish in the fast-growing IT industry.

***Describe your position and job duties.***

Currently I work as an associate application consultant for an accounting software provider, and am mainly responsible for providing consultancy services and for transforming customers' requirements into system functionalities. More specifically, I have to analyse customers' accounting procedures, policies and work flows and design a system that can help them with their operations.

***What is the major customer segment for your company?***

Nowadays, every company needs IT solutions to help its daily operation. So I would say our customers come from a diversified background and all have different needs. My main duties are to analyse the customers' daily operation in accounts payable, receipts systems, cost accounting systems, etc. and to tailor-make an accounting software system which can streamline their work flows. So accounting knowhow is the key to understanding their needs.

***Tell us about your academic background. Why did you decide to study for the AAT qualification?***

I studied IT for my bachelor's degree. Back to my secondary school days, I studied principles of accounts for the Advanced-Level public examinations: this gained me an exemption for two out of eight AAT subjects. What most fascinates me about accountancy is its wide applicability and cross-disciplinary nature. Even though my current job is not directly accounting, accounting knowledge is highly useful to me. I have to carefully study my customers' accounting procedures and common practices before providing a solution that fits in with their compliance requirements. The AAT qualification has given me all the foundation knowledge



that I need and is an important step on the road to attaining a higher accountancy qualification. It was therefore a perfect platform for me to take my accounting competency to another level as I develop my career.

***How long did it take you to finish the AAT exams? What was the biggest challenge for you?***

Altogether it took me three years to finish the exams. The biggest challenge was time management. When you study part-time, you have to really plan everything well and give up some social commitments. Subject-wise, auditing is a real challenge. It requires detailed preparation and past paper exercises before the exam.

***How do you find the knowledge and skills covered in AAT exams helps you in your daily work?***

The AAT qualification is very practical. Most of the knowledge and skills that I learnt from the AAT exams are applicable to my daily work. Two important areas for me are business knowledge and presentation skills. As a consultant, I regularly have to meet customers and understand their requirements for their accounting systems. Sometimes they may not be able to express clearly what they are looking for. In this situation, my accounting knowhow learnt from the AAT exams becomes very useful in communicating ideas and understanding their business workflows.

In some cases they may even seek for my advice on accounting-related matters such as how the audit report should be prepared, how the financial statements should be consolidated, and so on. This is the kind of trust that has built up between us, and which helps me excel in this field. The business communication studies have strengthened both the written and oral presentation skills required when I'm liaising with customers or preparing the documents needed for every project.

***How has the AAT qualification helped your career development?***

The AAT qualification has strengthened my personal profile, especially in the eyes of employers in accounting firms. I reckon AAT is the qualification that employers will count on. Through the AAT qualification, I learn to see the big picture of accounting, auditing, taxation and law. AAT has opened the door for me to the accounting profession, while fuelling my success in IT sector. It is also a springboard to reaching a higher level in the accountancy field. I have enrolled in the coming Professional Bridging Examination and hope that I can become a CPA one day. I will certainly recommend the AAT qualification to anyone who is ready to expand their horizons through a profession.