

*Versatile AAT*

## Maximizing results through dedication



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Every successful person knows the secret of success lies in devoting time and effort to their work. The challenge for part-time students is how to balance work and study. Eric Cheung tells us how he accomplished his goal of acquiring the AAT qualification within a year in spite of the challenges and difficulties that most working students face.

### ***Tell us about your background in accounting. What drew you to the profession?***

My interest in accounting can be traced back to my secondary school years. I chose accounting when I was in form four; primarily because I did not feel drawn to the arts and science subjects. I was more interested in commercial subjects.

After studying principles of accounts for four years, I became interested in pursuing further studies in the field. I also realized that the need for accounting personnel is ubiquitous in today's commercial world. This translated to a very promising future for anyone who is willing to devote time and energy to this career.

### ***What are your key responsibilities at Alibaba? How do they differ from your work at your previous positions?***

Before joining Alibaba in 2009, I had worked at an accounting firm and at a logistics company. My work there focused on general book-keeping, the full set of accounts and accounts payable. The nature of accounting work in these small and medium-sized organizations tends to be simpler but involves a diverse range of activities.

Moving to a large scale company, Alibaba, my work became more specialized. Now, as well as handling the general ledger and accounts payable, I have been assigned to refine, implement and maintain the financial information system which comprises a purchasing system and a system dealing with claims and contracts. Since our system technical team is based in Hangzhou, China, I co-ordinate between headquarters and overseas subsidiaries. The notion of such specialized and technical work can be challenging, but as I gained more experience and technical knowledge I have become more confident in providing professional advice to various departments on improving their systems.



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### ***Why did you decide to undertake the AAT qualification?***

After graduation, I could not get into the university's accounting programme. Not wanting to give up my dream of becoming an accounting professional, I originally studied for a higher diploma programme in accounting, but then I opted for the vocational route provided by the HKIAAT as it offers greater flexibility and could be an even faster way for me to become an accounting professional. I finally sat and passed seven AAT papers in one go (with an exemption from one paper): I believe this is a combination of hard work and luck.

### ***What have you learnt from studying for the AAT Examination, and how do you apply what you have learnt at work?***

I highly value the strong knowledge base in accounting I learnt during my preparation for the AAT Examination. The syllabus is pragmatic. The fruit of my studies is most significant in several areas in my daily work. Paper 7 "Financial Accounting" taught me the essentials I need when handling a full sets of accounts. With the knowledge from my studies for Paper 8 "Principles of Auditing and Management Information Systems", I now have a firmer grasp of the underlying principles of the information system and therefore can implement control measures in my daily work.

Meanwhile, my knowledge from studies for Paper 6 "Fundamentals of Business Law" and Paper 2 "Business Communication and Organization and Management" have helped me in understanding the terms in contracts and in dealing with formal emails exchanged daily between my company and its clients. All these facets have sharpened my skills and enhanced my performance.

### ***How do you cope with balancing work and studies? Do you have any advice on this for students?***

To be honest, preparing for seven papers in such a short period of time was indeed challenging. As a result, I decided to switch from full-time to part-time employment during that period. Working two days a week, I was able to concentrate on my studies. I set up a study plan and limited myself to spending three weeks on each paper and to review all the study notes and past papers. My advice for AAT students is to divide your study time wisely to each papers.

### Eric Cheung's study and career path

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|-----------------|---|
| 2006            | Form 7 graduated  |
| 05/2007-01/2008 | Full time accounts clerk at Chan's Commercial and Industries Company                  |
| 01/2008-06/2008 | Part time accounts clerk at Chan's Commercial and Industries Company                  |
| June 2008       | Completed all eight AAT Examination papers in one go (with an exemption from Paper 1) |
| 2008-2009       | Accounts clerk in Eternal International (HK) Ltd.                                     |
| 2009-2010       | Accounts clerk at Alibaba.com Hong Kong Limited                                       |
| 2010-present    | Studying for BA (Hons) in Accounting at Edinburgh Napier University                   |
| 2010-present    | Senior accounts clerk at Alibaba.com Hong Kong Limited                                |

