

# ACCOUNTING TECHNICIANS

2020 UPDATE: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS





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## ABOUT CAPA

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The Confederation of Asian and Pacific Accountants (CAPA) is recognised by the global accountancy profession, represented by the International Federation of Accountants, as a regional organisation representing national Professional Accountancy Organisations (PAOs) operating in, or with an interest in, the Asia-Pacific region. The national PAOs, collectively referred to as CAPA's members, represent close to 2 million accountants across the world.

The mission of CAPA is to enhance the value of the accountancy profession in Asia Pacific by:

- contributing to the development of PAOs;
- promoting ethical values and the benefits of high-quality accounting, reporting and assurance; and
- speaking out as a voice of the accountancy profession.

## ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

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This publication is supported by the Member Development Committee (MDC) of CAPA providing valuable advice and oversight. The MDC is focused on the development of strong and sustainable PAOs through the identification, development and sharing of relevant knowledge, tools and guidance.

This publication and other development materials may be accessed at, and downloaded from, the CAPA website at: [www.capa.com.my](http://www.capa.com.my). Any comments on these publications or related materials should be directed to the CAPA Secretariat: [admin@capa.com.my](mailto:admin@capa.com.my)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**The accountancy profession in or with an interest in Asia Pacific** – CAPA is grateful to all the PAOs and other Accounting Technicians member organisations in or with an interest in Asia Pacific that provided Country Updates included in this publication. CAPA would also like to thank PwC Malaysia for sharing information in respect to their non-graduate recruitment program.

## ENDORSEMENT

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**International Federation of Accountants (IFAC)** – IFAC is the global organisation for the accountancy profession dedicated to serving the public interest by strengthening the profession and contributing to the development of strong international economies.

A key focus area for IFAC is supporting the development of PAOs and their members. IFAC endorses this publication, which it recommends to those PAOs seeking to create, support, liaise with, or otherwise assist with developing and strengthening the Accounting Technicians sector.



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# PREFACE

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# PREFACE

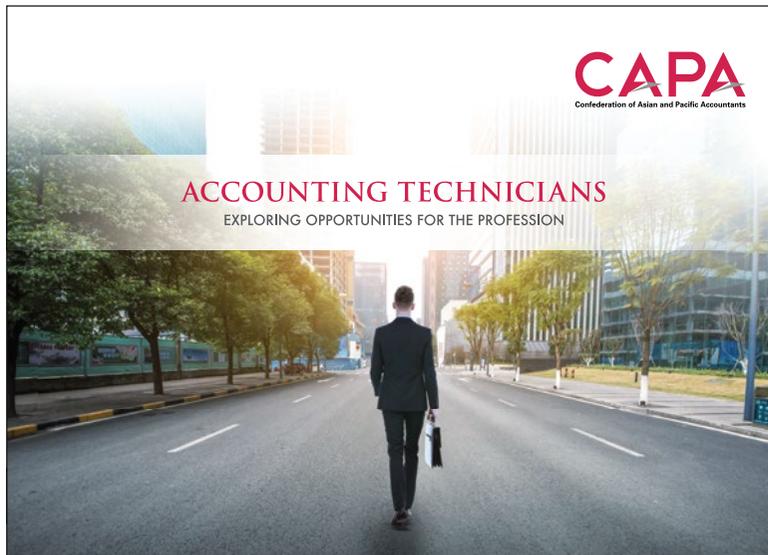
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## Accounting Technicians – Exploring Opportunities for the Profession

At the end of 2018, CAPA issued a publication that considered the Accounting Technicians (AT) sector or the “workforce (bookkeepers) supporting the analysis and preparation of financial information at an operational level”. The publication was in part informed by a 2016 CAPA Survey of Professional Accountancy Organisations (PAOs) throughout Asia Pacific which collected information about the availability of AT or similar programs and qualifications within their jurisdiction.

The aim of the publication was to encourage PAOs throughout the Asia-Pacific region to consider the importance of ATs or equivalent in their respective jurisdictions. As indicated in the publication, PAOs were encouraged “to consider whether and how they might create, support, partner, liaise with, or otherwise assist with developing and/or strengthening an AT (or equivalent) cohort within their country”. The publication also sets out the nature of the AT sector in a number of jurisdictions in the region.

**Accounting Technicians – Exploring Opportunities for the Profession** was a ground-breaking publication and interested parties are encouraged to be familiar with the detailed contents.



In summary, it defines important terminology, followed by ‘WHY’, ‘WHAT’ and ‘HOW’ sections.

The ‘WHY’ section discusses the case for considering the topic of ATs. It outlines the benefits to economies, governments and businesses, and individuals that pursue such a career. It also sets out why it benefits the public interest and can strengthen the accountancy profession.

The ‘WHAT’ section expounds on the design and implementation considerations for an AT program, including describing the various organisational arrangements that exist, often dependent on national, economic, regulatory, cultural and historic variables. While recognising alternative models do exist and can evolve for an AT program, the publication identified four (4) models, namely:

- Separate organisation sponsored by a national PAO
- AT segment embedded within a national PAO
- Separate organisation established independently of any national PAO
- Partnering with others to deliver an AT program

It also identified common characteristics of an AT program, as follows:



Diagram 1: Nine characteristic of an AT program

The 'HOW' section provides details regarding the organisational arrangements and AT or equivalent programs in eleven (11) countries.

The publication is designed for PAOs and stakeholders to increase their understanding of:

- The AT sector, the services it provides and the benefits it brings
- The various operating models and programs that exist
- Potential opportunities for PAOs, including either developing or sustaining the AT sector

It concludes by encouraging PAOs to consider the situation in their own jurisdiction and whether further development of the AT sector could result in the suggested benefits.

## Stakeholder Interest

The World Bank in many of their *Reports on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC) for Accounting and Auditing* for various countries have underlined the importance of a mid-tier accountant stream for both the corporate and public sectors. This is particularly applicable in developing and emerging economies where access to a sufficient volume of well-trained finance personnel can be challenging. Such accountants can be a vital component in the professionalisation of the public sector and implementing public financial management reforms necessary to support economic development.

The importance of this segment was further highlighted when IFAC, in partnership with AAT<sup>1</sup> in the United Kingdom, issued 'An Illustrative Competency Framework for Accounting Technicians' in February 2019, which laid out "the foundations of the skills required by all aspiring ATs to allow different entry points into the accountancy profession and the opportunity to progress within it". The framework offers an understanding of what ATs may be expected to know and do as part of their role; raises awareness of the importance of ATs in the financial reporting supply chain; and recognises the increase in their global recognition.

<sup>1</sup> The Association of Accounting Technicians

# PREFACE

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## The 2020 Update

CAPA was interested to understand if there were, and the nature of, any developments since the issue of **'Accounting Technicians – Exploring Opportunities for the Profession'** in 2018. We were aware of some exciting developments taking place in certain jurisdictions. The follow-up exercise therefore set out to gather details regarding any developments, and as applicable, to identify any key trends or messages.

This 2020 Update report sets out the findings, and in particular identifies a number of **'influencing factors'** that lead to decisions regarding if and how the AT sector develops in a particular context. The **Appendix** section provides a total of nineteen (19) Country Updates, nine (9) of which were updates of Case Studies contained in the 2018 publication, with the remainder from countries not included in that publication. These latter inclusions contain expanded background information as well as details of the more recent developments.

We hope this report will contribute towards further conversations as PAOs explore and consider potential opportunities in the AT sector.

## The Future of the AT Sector

The accountancy profession is continually changing. Stakeholders of all types, including the public, are demanding a wider range of information upon which to take decisions. The traditional roles of accountants and auditors are therefore being challenged. Further, in the digital economy, the volume of available data and information is immense and technology now features significantly in the work of the accountant. Certain work undertaken by accountants, for instance the manipulation and analysis of data, can now be handled by technology, including artificial intelligence. This has led some to question the future of accountants currently performing such roles, and in particular the AT.

It is difficult to know what the future will hold and the research in this area is limited. However, the Association of Accounting Technicians in the United Kingdom (AAT UK), in conjunction with Nottingham Business School at Nottingham Trent University, conducted some largely UK-based research in 2019 to consider 'the future of ATs'.

The research confirmed that technology, manifested in cloud computing, artificial intelligence and blockchain, will undoubtedly impact and shape the role of the AT in the future. However, only 15% of the 500 respondees to the survey thought that *most* of the tasks performed by ATs will be automated, with 80% suggesting *some* of the tasks would be. The inference is that ATs will still be needed, however to maintain relevance, they will need to adapt and evolve.

The survey revealed that the following skills will be most important for ATs to be successful in the future employment market – basic accounting, communication, ethics, corporate governance, IT, data analysis, strategic thinking, problem solving, and forensic.

ATs are often regarded as providing cost-effective services to organisations and playing important support roles to professional accountants. It would appear unlikely that these attributes will change, whilst the whole continuum of the wider accountancy profession spectrum evolves and changes. This statement is perhaps supported by some widespread developments in various countries, supported by an increased focus on school leavers and apprenticeship schemes, and an increased focus on diversity and inclusion. The key developments include:

- large accountancy firms are no longer focussed on 'graduate only' talent pools;
- small and medium-sized businesses are gaining increased recognition in their contribution to economies and the need for them to be efficient and effective; and
- there are increased calls for the public sector to 'professionalise'.

These are all developments 'ripe' for well trained, cost-effective, finance professionals.

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# INSIGHTS

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# INSIGHTS

The findings provide a diverse range of insights.

In some jurisdictions, PAOs have either embarked on an AT journey or are fine-tuning and recalibrating their existing AT program. The rationale behind these journeys are varied – from addressing and catering to market needs, to the professionalisation of the segment both in corporate and public sectors, to the more noble intent of supporting social mobility. Some PAOs noted that demand increased exponentially when legal and market recognition came into place.

In contrast, in other jurisdictions there is simply no immediate demand or need for a ‘professionalised’ mid-tier sector of accountants. Further, it could be questioned as to whether there is a willingness to create such a supply. This may be the case where a successful accountancy ecosystem is deemed to already exist without a specifically recognised AT cohort.

Government policies and economic models can play a vital role in influencing the direction of development. Where governments are pushing for accountancy reforms, whether in the public or private sectors, and where the value of a mid-tier accountancy stream is considered important, the AT segment is supported and thrives better.



Diagram 2: Five factors that influence decisions to develop the AT sector

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## Development Decisions: Influencing Factors

The diversity of insights and perspectives from the dialogues is an indication that there is no one answer to any development related decisions. It was evident that what will work in some jurisdictions may not be right for others. Conversely, it was also possible to adapt and learn from organisational best practices.

Based on our observations, the five (5) factors in Diagram 2 would appear to have influence over development decisions taken in regards to the AT segment.

The factors may intertwine and are complex. In some jurisdictions, decisions are based on several influencing factors whereas in others, a singular factor drives the decision. This list of influencing factors is clearly not exhaustive. However, by exploring them, from the perspective of a **Demand** and **Supply** spectrum, CAPA aims to provide information to support conversations leading to decisions and/or initiatives being taken by PAOs.

### 1. Market Trends and Recognition

Current human resource management strategies gravitate towards the diversification of human capital. Studies shows that diversity enhances organisational effectiveness by creating a culture of plurality and tolerance. Such a culture is believed to promote collective and better decision making through multiple viewpoints. Diversity can take various forms and one such form is through the recruitment from different talent pools.

Recent employment trends in some countries represented by CAPA members have spotlighted the propensity of employers, especially those providing professional services, towards attracting and recruiting high school leavers. Traditionally, the focus or minimum entry requirement would be at tertiary levels. Large accounting firms have been identified that may recruit non-graduates, some with AT qualifications, or support their staff to undertake such qualifications. This trend is helped further along where apprenticeship schemes, especially those supported by government fiscal policies, are available.

Also, industry moves towards Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), and shared or co-sourcing services, have actually given rise to an increase in demand for finance and accounting or tax compliance routine tasks. As pointed out in CAPA's earlier publication, these are the "kind of tasks typically performed by the AT sector".

Such trends can lead to 'market recognition' – at which point, an effective underlying endorsement of the role and value of ATs is established.

#### **Opportunities for Consideration**

- How are employment trends being addressed or supported, especially when apprenticeships or human resource management strategies focussing on diversification are on the rise?
- Should there be initiatives to engage with employers and recruitment agencies to raise awareness of the benefits of a 'professionalised' AT segment and the contribution they make to businesses and government?
- Does the PAO need to implement initiatives to drive market recognition?
- Has due consideration been given to supporting the demand created by industry trends such as BPO, shared or co-sourcing services?
- Should the AT sector be positioned to support areas beyond their traditional scope such as corporate compliance and data analytic functions?

## Case Study: PwC Malaysia's Non-Graduate Recruitment Program

Fostering a diversified and inclusive workplace requires strategic level thinking and innovative programs. The benefits for both the employer and employee are evident. CAPA interviewed PwC's Human Capital Team in Malaysia about their experience with a program that acknowledges the breadth of the accountancy profession.

### 1. What is the background to PwC Malaysia's non-graduate recruitment program?

The program commenced in 2011 with a small group called "Trainee Associates" based in our Kuala Lumpur office to support Assurance teams with tasks including casting checks on financial statements and compiling bank confirmations. The trainees had opted, for various reasons, not to pursue a degree program or complete professional accounting courses. Program applicants were school leavers at STPM<sup>2</sup> level or equivalent, those with Certified Accounting Technician qualifications, or Diploma holders. Subsequently renamed as "Earn While You Learn" (EWYL), the program expanded to other offices, the nature of the tasks broadened, and a few years ago, the Tax practice commenced a similar program.

The trainees receive financial support and time-off to complete their professional accounting qualification papers, while earning a salary and gaining work experience.

### 2. What studies or qualifications are supported by the program?

Trainees can opt for a range of studies and it is their choice how far they take their studies. Professional accounting qualifications, including ACCA<sup>3</sup> and MICPA<sup>4</sup>, are supported by the firm and approximately 80% of any intake pursue these qualifications.

### 3. Is the program viewed as a success – by PwC and the individuals?

Yes, overall, the program has been a success. The EWYL group has grown in size, from the initial small group of 12 to close to 200 in 2020, and the individuals are seen as valuable and strong contributors to the firm. The first batch of Trainee Associates were promoted to managers in 2019. With access to a dedicated career coach and personal mentoring, as well as continuous upskilling, they grow both professionally and personally, encouraging them to continue their career journey with PwC.

### 4. Where to from here?

We are continuously looking at ways to improve the EWYL program. One main area we are looking at is to expand the diversity of the EWYL talent pool, allowing for people with different backgrounds and experiences. We are pleased to see this as a way to support school leavers who may not have the opportunity to pursue an accounting qualification or degree. We are also continually reviewing the career path of Trainee Associates to ensure that their role remains relevant to the business and is meaningful for their growth.

### 5. Can you share the personal experience of one trainee?

One of our current managers joined us as part of the first group of Trainee Associates back in 2011 after completing her STPM. She came from a humble background and worked hard to juggle her studies and job, subsequently completing her professional papers in February 2019. She was promoted to manager in July 2019. She is now not only proud to help provide for her family, but she cited that one of her greatest achievements was being able to bring her whole family on a holiday, something which they never had the luxury to do before.

“ The EWYL program has not only provided many non-graduates the opportunity to kickstart their careers but also to further their education through a professional accounting qualification. In return, we are able to nurture them into valuable and strong professionals who contribute greatly to the firm's growing business. ”

– Azizan Zakaria, People Partner, PwC Malaysia –

<sup>2</sup> Malaysian Higher School Certificate

<sup>3</sup> The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants

<sup>4</sup> Malaysian Institute of Certified Public Accountants

## 2. Professionalisation

### a) The Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Sector

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may not need, and indeed may not be able to afford, to employ highly skilled professional accountants, especially where there is limited supply in their jurisdiction. SMEs may only have need for basic financial and management accounting, which could be met by trained and qualified ATs. Similarly, professional services are usually provided to SMEs through small and medium practices (SMPs). For some PAOs, these SMPs represent the majority of their members. SMPs may also employ non-professionally qualified accountants to support others deliver the required services. Again, access to relevant programs would undoubtedly strengthen this cohort and given their involvement in delivering services to the public, a level of regulation may benefit the individual, the SMP and the SME.

### b) The Public Sector

The public sector in many jurisdictions is served, from a bookkeeping and accounting perspective, by individuals trained in particular tasks that support activities such as procurement and the preparation of accounts which are/were based on cash accounting. Many may not have had the opportunity to be upskilled, to receive formal accountancy training in line with current international standards, nor to undertake a program leading to a qualification. As with SMEs and SMPs, highly skilled professional accountants are not necessarily required. AT or equivalent programs have been viewed and accepted in many jurisdictions as an important platform for professionalising these public sector servants. Some PAOs have been actively engaging with the government sector to support such professionalisation exercises while others are offering separate streams in their qualifications which are specifically public-sector focussed.

**Developing, growing and maturing SME and government sectors, both aiming to 'professionalise', can therefore be key factors in influencing the development of an AT segment.**

#### Opportunities for Consideration

- Is there a need to engage with appropriate SME/SMPs or organisations representing these groups, to support their professionalisation journey?
- Is there a need to recalibrate existing AT programs to meet the current market needs?
- Is there a need to advocate for the upskilling of the government sector and the use of an AT style program to assist?
- Should a separate qualification stream for the public sector be considered?

## 3. Government Policy Agenda and Recognition

Government policies are strong influencers for PAOs when taking decisions in relation to the AT market. In one of the markets, there was a strong push for developing employable skills among the youth and for women empowerment, and to do so through education. As a result of strong engagement efforts by PAOs in these markets, AT related programs were accepted by the government as one of the enablers to support such empowerment and diversity drives.

For some PAOs, AT programs were earmarked and used as platforms for promoting upward social mobility in their society. For others, AT programs were viewed as an avenue to support national reforms to elevate and strengthen public financial management. Stakeholder reports and ensuing recommendations to strengthen a country's financial ecosystem through the development or strengthening of mid-tier stream accountants, especially from development partners (e.g. World Bank's ROSC report for Accounting and Auditing), also played important roles to drive AT market developments in those countries.

In contrast, in certain jurisdictions, existing national regulations can limit the PAO's focus to only supporting the welfare of professional accountants, and/or legislation is not in place to facilitate a separate AT membership category to be introduced. In a few jurisdictions, while the need to further enhance and develop the AT sector was recognised by the respective PAOs, the development requires legislative change and the process for this has either been slow or halted due to other government priorities.

Further, government orders may effectively raise barriers to entry into the AT segment when it is considered that the existing mid-stream accountant numbers exceed national needs. In one of the jurisdictions, the demand for AT programs softened when the authorities removed the right of the ATs to apply for an audit license. Some government structures also provided for and supported the delineation between professional accountants and mid-stream accountants.

Government recognition, or lack of, clearly matters.

#### Opportunities for Consideration

- Would public interest be better served by effective linkages or relationships forged between organisations representing professional accountants and other accountants? If it would, should the government play a role to encourage it?
- Should the PAO's strategy and plans include extending or strengthening engagement with relevant government authorities in raising awareness of the benefit of a stronger AT cohort?
- Is there a need to engage, advocate and/or lobby the authorities and/or regulators for legal recognition or for changes to the existing national accountancy ecosystem or framework?

## 4. Historical Institutional Arrangements

Existing organisational arrangements often reflect the legacy from the past. In this regard, some PAOs came into existence to support and regulate those providing audit and assurance services. These would be regarded as the professional accountants. Over time, this term would be extended to others that undertake the same educational and qualification programs. These persons often worked in the private sector, taking responsibility for the preparation of financial statements. In due course, professional accountants may work in a wide variety of roles, including, albeit often to a much lesser extent, in the public sector. The common characteristic was the qualification, established at a level which would demonstrate high technical competence and other skills.

Bookkeepers or similar mid-tier accountants providing other accountancy related services, often of a support nature, may have come under the purview of a different body or organisation. For a variety of reasons, such institutions may have existed without any consideration given to coordinating or establishing any linkages between the two separate cohorts.

In other cases, the professional accountants proud of their 'standing' in the public arena, may have had concerns to make any changes that would involve developing and recognising an AT cohort in case this had the unintended consequence in some way of diluting the actual or perceived value of the professional accountant.

No matter the reasons, existing organisational arrangements across the broad spectrum of accountancy often reflects history and legacy, tradition or culture. These therefore also influence future developments.

### **Opportunities for Consideration**

- Is there mutual benefit for further coordination between any different bodies or organisations that currently have separate remits?
- Will the existing accountancy ecosystem be strengthened as a result of stronger relationships and linkages between organisations separately representing the professional accountants and the ATs or similar mid-tier accountants?
- Should pathways or arrangements be established for those with AT or equivalent credentials to become professional accountants (e.g. CPAs or CAs)?

## 5. A Motivated PAO

As in most open market economies, market demand is a key factor influencing development decisions. In some markets, the mid-level accountancy segment appears to be already well-served by existing programs or qualifications outside the PAO's scope of operations. In others, PAOs are reviewing existing AT programs and contemplating revisions to such programs to meet current market needs. Consideration is also being made in several markets for pursuing mutual recognition with PAOs outside national borders. The reasons include enhancing the value of the existing qualification or membership and to allow for cross-border mobility.

The AT sector also presents a business opportunity for the PAOs in many markets – from launching a new AT or equivalent level program, to issuing an annual license to provide public practice services, and to introducing a new membership tier. The latter includes the potential for offering other member services such as CPD trainings or specialist upskilling certifications.

For some PAOs, the benefits that can derive from the existence of an AT or equivalent sector within a structured framework, are clear. Whether the operational arrangements or model adopted is one that brings the cohort within internal or external structures, it can be proposed that a well-structured accountancy ecosystem serves the public interest. It provides the ability to better regulate this group, including ensuring compliance with a Code of Conduct; and furthermore, the AT cohort can represent a natural and potential talent pipeline into professional accountancy and thereby further increase and strengthen the overall quality of available finance personnel.

### **Opportunities for Consideration**

- What are the possible business opportunities presented by developing an AT cohort in your market?
- Should there be consideration or discussion of mutual recognition by other PAOs, to increase the value of membership and allow for greater mobility?
- Should partnership possibilities be explored to introduce or strengthen the AT sector in the country?
- Should more specialised subjects (e.g. analytics, technology) aimed at upskilling the profession, be incorporated or provided as options, alongside core AT programs?
- Should pathways from mid-level accountancy qualifications to professional accountancy qualifications be considered or established?

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## Concluding Remarks

CAPA continues to encourage PAOs to consider their approach to the AT segment in the context of their own national market and regulatory structures, taking into account their respective development stage and access to resources. Whether a market is well served by the status quo or whether further action needs to be undertaken, the fundamental notion remains – PAOs, and the accountancy profession they seek to advance, must consider how the public interest is best served.

If the public interest is better served with the existence of a ‘professionalised’ AT cohort – and in some instances there is a real need to regulate an existing but unqualified prevailing sector – the PAO needs to carefully consider its strategy in this space.

Any decision to support the development of an AT sector should be considered from the perspective of this ‘bigger picture’ and whether public confidence will be enhanced by an apparent stronger and more cohesive accountancy ecosystem that serves all segments of the market.



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# APPENDIX: COUNTRY UPDATES

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# APPENDIX: COUNTRY UPDATES

## AUSTRALIA



### Background

#### IPA Group

The IPA Group was formed in 2015 when the Institute of Public Accountants (IPA) and the Institute of Financial Accountants in the United Kingdom came together. With a combined membership of more than 40,000, the group indicates it is “the world’s largest SME-focused accountancy organisation”.

#### AAT Australia

Formed in 2002, the Association of Accounting Technicians in Australia (AAT Australia) is a professional association for bookkeepers and accounting technicians in Australia. There are three (3) levels of membership: Student, Affiliate and Member. Student membership is typically available to anyone enrolled in a Certificate IV\* in Financial Services (Accounting) or (Bookkeeping) course or higher. Graduates will advance to either Affiliate or Member level depending on experience. Currently, there are approximately 3,300 students and members.

### Recent Developments

On 1 July 2020, AAT Australia joined the IPA group.

AAT Australia and IPA have had a close relationship for almost 20 years, with the IPA providing ongoing support as a major sponsor. The integration aims to enable all current AAT members to access a wider range of benefits and services, supported by IPA’s infrastructure.

The key benefits cited for the integration were the delivery of greater member value, efficiency and effectiveness. This included achieving strength in numbers, having access to stronger support and infrastructure, and cost savings resulting from alignments (e.g. office functions).

All AAT members were automatically admitted to membership of the IPA Group as “IPA (AAT)” members, while retaining their existing membership of AAT Australia. A new certification program, a “Certified Accounting Technician” or CAT program, will be offered by the IPA Group. The CAT will be delivered online and will include a hybrid of online and other assessments. A pathway will exist between the CAT and IPA programs.

\*Level 4 of the Australian Qualification Framework or equivalent to 6-12 months of a degree study

## CAMBODIA



### Background

The Kampuchea Institute of Certified Public Accountants and Auditors (KICPAA) has partnered with ACCA on a Joint Examination Scheme arrangement since 2004. Students registered under this scheme take the ACCA Certified Accounting Technician (CAT) program in Cambodia. The CAT syllabus was embedded into the Bachelor degree course in Accounting and Finance of *CamEd* – a private business school accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

### Recent Developments

A new Cambodia Accounting Technician Qualification (ATQ) was launched in 2019. The ATQ was designed by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) with sponsorship from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and ICAEW. The ATQ is available in two languages – Khmer and English. Holders of the ATQ will receive the designation “CTA” which stands for Certified Technician Accountant, and will become technician members of KICPAA, subject to attaining appropriate practical experience.

The first two (2) papers were to be offered from January 2020 with the first examinations in June 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, physical tuition classes were suspended. Effort is being made to move tuition classes and assessment into a virtual environment and KICPAA plans to introduce online tuition support before the end of 2020.

The demand for the ATQ is expected to be high, especially from university students who will take the qualification as part of degree foundation studies. Plans to market the ATQ include roadshows at universities and publicly available workshops on selected subject matters, targeted at unqualified local practitioners.

The Bachelor degree course in Accounting and Finance of *CamEd*, including the ACCA CAT syllabus, is still available. Further, in recent years, partnerships have been formed with several universities in Cambodia to embed ACCA’s Foundations in Accountancy (FIA), which is a suite of entry level qualifications, and/or CAT studies into the universities’ curriculums. Students on these programs prepare for the FIA and/or CAT qualifications while simultaneously studying for their university degrees.

Nearly 300 individuals have attained FIA qualifications over the last three (3) years, of which 56% continued on with full professional qualification studies.

**Editor’s note:** We understand the information contained in this country update reflects the current situation. However, we advise users to confirm with KICPAA as necessary.

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## CANADA



### Background

The Advanced Certificate in Accounting and Finance (ACAF), launched in 2015, was designed to meet an anticipated demand for those seeking intermediate-level professional accounting and finance skills. The ACAF was delivered exclusively through CPA Canada and the CPA provincial/regional bodies until 2017.

Thereafter, the profession determined that post-secondary institutions (PSIs) were well-positioned to deliver the full suite of entry, technical, and applied courses for the ACAF program. This expanded delivery was intended to provide improved access and convenience for students, with CPA Canada administering the ACAF final examination.

### Recent Developments

The ACAF program is being discontinued. CPA Canada is working with the PSIs for a smooth wind-down of ACAF that ensures students are enabled to finish the program before the final ACAF National Examination on 29 January 2021, or transition to an alternative course of study.

While the CPA profession stands behind the quality of the ACAF program – in fact, the content for the ACAF applied courses has been made available to PSIs to enable and support them to continue offering material that was seen as valuable to the market – the ACAF did not gain traction in the market. This suggested that other accounting diploma programs across the country are meeting the existing market needs. Pathways from such programs to the CPA Professional Education program have been identified.

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## CHINA



### Background

The Certified Public Accountants (CPA) system has prevailed in China since 1980. There is another system, the Accounting Professional Title (APT) system for accounting specialists who work across the whole spectrum of the economy ranging from private to the public sectors, to non-profit organisations as well as the academia. There are three (3) levels for the APT: Preliminary, Intermediate and Advanced. The Preliminary level of the APT resembles an AT equivalent level.

The National Accountant Assessment & Certification Centre (NAACC), Ministry of Finance delivers the APT examination, whereas the accounting divisions of the provincial finance bureaus are responsible for the oversight of CPD and professional conduct. On successful passing of the APT examination, the titles “Preliminary Accountant”, “Accountant” and “Advanced Accountant” are awarded respectively. Ninety (90) credits of CPD must be completed annually.

Those who are entitled “Advanced Accountants” are expected to be able to handle complicated financial and accounting work. Generally, they are able to hold a position of Head of Financial/Accounting Department or equivalent.

A pathway exists for the “Advanced Accountants” to the CPA examination organised by the Chinese Institute of Certified Public Accountants (CICPA) with one subject exemption available.

### Recent Developments

An advisory group consisting of academia and other key stakeholders have recommended that a professional body, similar to the CICPA, is required and will be helpful in order to facilitate the professional development of this group of accounting title-holders.

Currently, various government departments are responsible for the different aspects of the APT system such as examination, certification and oversight of professional conduct. With a professional membership type of body in place, the various functions for the professional development of the accounting title-holders will be well integrated and can be more effectively delivered.

## APPENDIX: COUNTRY UPDATES

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### FIJI



#### Background

Affiliate Accountants form the first-tier of Fiji Institute of Accountants (FIA) membership from which there is a clear route to full membership as a professional Chartered Accountant.

Proposed legislation by way of a draft Bill was finalised in 2017. It provides for statutory recognition of Affiliate Accountants as Accounting Technicians.

#### Recent Developments

The Draft Bill is still to be addressed by the Fijian Parliament. At this stage, it is likely to be moved from the 2020 Parliamentary agenda to that of 2021.

FIA's engagement with the Government on this proposed new FIA Act is ongoing.

### INDIA



#### Background

The Certificate in Accounting Technician or CAT program was introduced by the Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI-CMA) in 2008 in consultation with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. The program is therefore recognised in India by various state governments under their skills development programs. The underlying objective of the program is to empower the younger generation. CAT holders typically perform entry level accountancy tasks in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector. Total admission to the program exceeds 30,000 to date.

The CAT program, offered through 400 centres across the country, is a one-year employment-oriented program consisting of two (2) levels: Foundation and Competency. Admissions and examinations are conducted on-line. An internship period (work experience) of 45 days is required at ICAI-CMA approved organisations, prior to the issue of a certificate. There is currently no separate category of membership at ICAI-CMA for CAT holders.

Several targeted projects and initiatives have been rolled out since the program commenced, to focus on and address specific causes, namely:

- **Additional Skills Acquisition Program (ASAP)**

- o Many state governments and Union Territories (UT) in India are responding to the federal government's call to focus on developing employable skills among the youths under the ASAP.
- o Kerala and other states have approached ICAI-CMA to offer the CAT program under the ASAP initiative.
- o In Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh UT, the first batch of CAT students received a full fee waiver while several other regions and/or states are granted 50% fee waivers by ICAI-CMA.

- **SHE Skill Program** – a CAT program directed at women empowerment was launched by the Institute in 2019.

On successful completion of the CAT examinations, the incumbent is eligible for admission into the Intermediate Level of the ICAI-CMA course.

(continued from page 22)



### Recent Developments

A decision has been taken to offer the CAT program through the “Association of Accounting Technicians” (AAT), a subsidiary company of ICAI-CMA.

Further, there are also plans to work with the governments of the different states in India to roll out tailored CAT programs which meet specific economic and industry-based needs in those states. Currently, negotiation is underway with the Department of Higher Education in Jammu & Kashmir to sign an MOU to offer the CAT program as part of the ASAP in the UT.

After discussions with CAPA, it is understood consideration may now be given to:

- Admitting CAT holders to membership at AAT, thus providing membership benefits as well as obligations such as CPD requirements and compliance with a Code of Conduct.
- Further exploring opportunities to recognise the CAT program with other PAOs both nationally and internationally.

## JAPAN



### Background

In Japan, there is a specific credential for bookkeeping issued by the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI), a network that comprises, and operates for, national economic organisations mainly from the SME sector.

JCCI administers examinations and issues a certificate on successful completion of the examinations. JCCI does not offer training programs for the examination. Further, it is not an organisation for which the individuals then become members, and hence there are no ongoing membership-type requirements e.g. CPD.

This bookkeeping credential is very popular and is a gateway to entering the accounting and finance sector.

The qualification has four (4) levels ranging from Level 4 which is an introduction to bookkeeping, to Level 1 which covers advanced business and cost accounting as well as commercial bookkeeping. Level 1 is a well recognised and reputable qualification for accounting in Japan but holders of the qualification are not eligible or licensed to perform tax and/or audit related services. Level 1 holders may apply for admission to undertake a Tax Accountant qualification but not the CPA qualification.

### Recent Developments

The Japanese Institute of Certified Public Accountants (JICPA) has not taken any specific action in relation to ATs and do not have any plans to develop a program and designation.

## APPENDIX: COUNTRY UPDATES

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### KOREA



#### Background

An AT qualification, under the umbrella of the Korean Institute of Certified Public Accountants (KICPA), was officially recognised by the Financial Services Commission at the end of 2015.

To be officially recognised by the government and to also meet market needs, KICPA structured the AT certificate into two (2) streams: FAT (Financial Accounting Technician) and TAT (Tax Accounting Technician).

A certificate is awarded on successful completion of the AT examinations. However, no separate category of membership for ATs exists at KICPA.

An AT certificate holder is required to renew their certificate every five (5) years and undertake at least four (4) hours of CPD over that period. The CPD, which is provided by KICPA, should be accounting and/or taxation in nature and should have relevance to the respective AT for conducting their work. KICPA has a dedicated website for ATs where these CPD programs can be accessed.

#### Recent Developments

Since the program was officially recognised there has been a significant increase in the number of candidates taking the AT examinations. In 2019, the number exceeded 60,000.

### MALAYSIA



#### Background

The Malaysian Association of Accounting Technicians (MAAT) was formed by the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) in 1990 and MAAT was subsequently renamed to Malaysian Association of Accounting Administrators (MAAAA). At present, there are no provisions in the Accountants Act in Malaysia to legally recognise an AT or equivalent designation, or class of membership.

A recently released MIA Competency Framework (CFM) recognises three (3) levels of membership classification, to serve different market needs, based on the three (3) proficiency levels of Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced in accordance with the International Education Standards (IES). These levels are guided by the “Framework for International Education Standards for Professional Accountants and Aspiring Professional Accountants, Handbook of International Education Pronouncements” issued by the International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB).

In the MIA CFM, the “Accounting Technician” class of membership is introduced for the accountancy professionals who are able to demonstrate the Foundation level of proficiency of the IES. The support for this tier of membership was driven by market needs demanding more novel services in the accounting environment, such as Shared Service Centres and Global Business Services. The growth in Malaysia’s SME sector, coupled with this shift in demand, requires more advanced skill sets and a need to officially recognise and support this sector.

In accordance with the MIA CFM, AT members will have theoretical education and two (2) years of relevant practical experience, as well as the need to comply with recognised CPD and Code of Conduct requirements as set by MIA.

It is also envisaged that proposed pathways to Intermediate and Advanced levels, and associated requirements, will be considered as part of the implementation phase of the competency framework.

#### Recent Developments

The MIA CFM document was released to the public in July 2020.

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## MONGOLIA

### Background

Following transition to a market economy in 1990, the accountancy profession in Mongolia has been governed by the national Law of Accounting. This law establishes that the responsibility for bookkeeping and the issuing of financial statements rests with either the professional accountant or certified public accountant. The former consists of 4-year degree graduates and the latter are graduates who have passed the CPA examinations and have been admitted as members of the Mongolian Institute of Certified Public Accountants (MonICPA).

Mongolia has approximately 25 universities offering bachelor in accounting or equivalent programs. The overall cost of such programs is very low and accessibility is high. Degree holders are well sought after by employers.

Degree graduates will initially generally carry out the bookkeeping or lower level tasks and may take the CPA examinations at MonICPA to progress their careers. A minimum of two (2) years prior experience is required before attempting the CPA examinations. On successful completion of three (3) fundamental examinations, there are a further six (6) professional papers. The usual period for completion of the program to qualify as a CPA is about two (2) years.

There are also many training centres in Mongolia offering short term (say 6 months) accounting courses but holders of these are not as employable in comparison to university degree holders.

Previously, one (1) university in Mongolia provided the ACCA's Certified Accounting Technician program as part of a degree course. Students who undertook this degree course progressed to the ACCA qualification program, which together with subsequent work experience, provided ACCA membership. This degree course attracted students with ambitions of working overseas. This degree course is no longer available but has since been replaced by a dual certificate program which simultaneously allows students to directly pursue the full ACCA qualification while studying for a degree.

### Recent Developments

In 2019, the Financial Action Task Force 'grey-listed' Mongolia for anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing (AML/CTF) framework deficiencies. As part of measures to improve the AML/CTF regime, a committee was formed to consider the registration of all those practicing or providing accountancy services which mainly consists of experienced, but not qualified personnel or professional accountants who are not CPAs. Under the Law of Accounting, MonICPA is now responsible for registering and authorising these sole proprietors and practitioners or, where relevant, their firms. A certificate of authorisation is issued to successful registrants. The certificate is renewable yearly. Financial statements prepared by the incumbents are recognised by the Ministry of Finance.

There are no minimum entry requirements for this registration which is compulsory for those providing accountancy services. Presently, professional accountants or firms providing accountancy services register on-line. The individual practitioners or partners in a firm attend a 1-hour on-line course, and must successfully complete a 15-minute multiple-choice self-assessment test. There are no limits to attempts and the fees are minimal.

MonICPA have no plans at this stage to introduce any separate AT qualification in Mongolia. This largely reflects the easy access to tertiary education and hence a sufficient supply of accountancy related graduates that gain immediate employment and the opportunity to register and obtain a certificate to practice and/or to qualify with MonICPA.



## APPENDIX: COUNTRY UPDATES

### NEPAL



#### Background

The “Accounting Technicians” or AT qualification was introduced in 2010 for the mid-level segment of the accountancy profession. The qualification comes under the purview of an AT Board governed by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal (ICAN) under ICAN Act 1997. The examinations consist of four (4) papers covering the topics of Advanced Accounting, Audit and Assurance, Corporate and Other Laws, and Tax Laws.

Practical experience of eighteen (18) months is required under the mentorship of a professional accountant. Post qualifying, twenty (20) hours of CPD is required per annum.

Qualified AT members are subject to the IFAC Code of Ethics and an AT Disciplinary Committee exists to investigate potential disciplinary matters, recommending any further action to the AT Board.

ATs are eligible to join CAP-II level of the Chartered Accountancy program as a result of exemptions given for areas of prior learning.

ATs were eligible to apply for a license from the Auditor General to audit certain entities including charities and NGOs up to 2015, when the law was amended and this is no longer available. As a consequence, the demand for the AT course has fallen.

#### Recent Developments

At the end of 2019, ICAN Council consulted with the Ministry of Finance to support capacity building of those charged with financial management (namely budgeting and accounting) in the public sector at all three (3) levels i.e. Federal, Provincial and Local. A task force has since been set up to study the overall situation.

As a consequence, the AT syllabus is currently being reviewed and benchmarked against other established AT programs. Consideration is also being given to either incorporating topics related to public sector financial management into the AT course itself or developing a separate certification course(s). It is expected that this new AT program will be ready by the end of 2020. Further, the program is expected to attract those who are keen to have a career in government as they will be expected to work in the public sector for their practical training.

### NEW ZEALAND



#### Background

The “Accounting Technician” (AT) designation is one of two designations offered through Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (Chartered Accountants ANZ), a professional body which represents members globally, the majority based in Australasia. The AT designation is a legacy from one of Chartered Accountants ANZ predecessor bodies, the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants (NZICA) which continues to regulate members living in New Zealand. The designation was first introduced over 20 years ago and is only available in New Zealand.

The NZICA Rules do not permit ATs to offer accounting services to the public. Members offering accounting services to the public must be a “Chartered Accountant” (CA) Member and hold a Certificate of Public Practice.

#### Recent Developments

Since the original CAPA AT publication in 2018, only two (2) main pathways now exist to become an AT: Academic or Experience. The vocational pathway is now only available in limited circumstances.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) undertook a Business Qualifications review from 2018 to 2020, resulting in the launch of the NZ Diploma of Business (Level 5) Accounting Strand which is the minimum entry qualification to AT membership at Chartered Accountants ANZ. A review of the changes to the NZQA qualification and subsequent alignment by Chartered Accountants ANZ to these changes, resulted in revisions to the AT Academic pathway entry requirements. One of the options now is the completion of at least the first year of study of a degree accredited by Chartered Accountants ANZ and passing subjects in required AT competency areas. Approved university and polytechnic courses satisfying the AT Academic pathway requirements are widely available across New Zealand.

These recent changes to the Academic pathway entry requirements for AT have seen positive growth in enrolments into the AT program.

Further, engagement is increasing with tertiary education institutions, high-school leavers and career advisors to raise awareness of career opportunities in accounting and business.

The AT designation continues to be actively supported by employers and members across New Zealand.

Growth opportunities for the AT program and entry pathways will form part of an anticipated strategy review.

## PAKISTAN



### Background

The Pakistan Institute of Public Finance Accountants (PIPFA) was launched as AAT Pakistan in 1993. Renamed in 2000, PIPFA is sponsored by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan, Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Pakistan and the Auditor General of Pakistan.

The main objectives for the establishment of PIPFA were to meet the demand for mid-level professionally trained staff to support the professional accountant as well as to meet the need for stronger financial management capabilities in the public sector.

The syllabus consists of four (4) levels with an option for two (2) streams: Corporate and Public Sector.

### Recent Developments

PIPFA has been focusing on supporting capacity building in the public sector as well as in the delivery of further value to its members. Key efforts undertaken recently included:

- Revising the syllabus in 2020
- Developing common syllabi for the public sector stream of its qualification
- Giving consideration to an International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) qualification for public sector
- Strengthening engagement with the public sector for the implementation of IPSAS
- Working with various government departments/organisations to strengthen the capacity of their accounting or audit functions through the adoption of the PIPFA qualification
- Signing a number of MOUs with organisations for the delivery of CPD
- Introducing an entrance test
- Introducing mandatory soft skills training such as presentation skills alongside the core program of the qualification
- Introducing an ethics module into the qualification
- Aligning the investigation and disciplinary procedures with SMO 6 of IFAC's Compliance Program
- Taking steps to be recognised as a 'Statutory Body' under an Act of Parliament, which will serve to enhance the recognition of PIPFA members and their eligibility to provide further services
- Adopting latest version of IFAC Code of Ethics
- Liaising with CIPFA<sup>5</sup> regarding the public sector to further advance the existing affiliation

<sup>5</sup> The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA



### Background

AT is an important segment for Certified Practising Accountants Papua New Guinea (CPA PNG). Students, termed as Registered Accounting Technicians (RAT), made up 19% of total membership in 2020.

The program, categorised as Certified Accounting Technicians (CAT), was initially modelled after the CAT program offered by ACCA. Students enter the program either with a diploma in accounting or business, or a non-accounting degree.

On passing seven (7) examinations (6 compulsory and 1 elective subject) and after three (3) years working experience in accounting, a RAT may apply for the CAT membership. Successful applicants are entitled to use the designatory letters of "CAT (PNG)", to receive a membership certificate, and to have partial voting rights. CATs may proceed to qualify as a Certified Practising Accountant (CPA) by successfully attempting the examinations for five (5) compulsory subjects out of eight (8) compulsory units of the CPA qualification.

Typically, students undertake the CAT program in PNG on a part-time basis while working. Consequently, the period taken to complete the exams is often around six (6) years. The CATs usually carry out bookkeeping and accounting tasks at their places of work.

Post qualifying, twenty (20) hours each of both structured and unstructured CPD are required.

### Recent Developments

The format of the CAT program is currently under discussion.

## APPENDIX: COUNTRY UPDATES

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### PHILIPPINES



#### Background

The Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants' (PICPA) remit under the Philippine Accountancy Act is to support the welfare of the Certified Public Accountants (CPAs), the advancement of their profession, and the attainment of other professional ends. Given the above, non-CPA communities are beyond its jurisdiction.

Consequently, non-CPA organisations exist to support the non-CPAs (e.g. accounting graduates or ATs) such as the National Institute of Accounting Technicians or NIAT.

NIAT is a substantial organisation with membership of 20,000 members and approximately 50,000 students. NIAT prides itself as the “premier organisation for Accounting Technicians” in the Philippines and administers a Certified Accounting Technician (CAT) qualification. Students qualify to become CAT members of NIAT on successful completion of the CAT examinations and gaining at least one (1) year of relevant work experience.

#### Recent Developments

CAPA's publication has given rise to consideration for the need to have better coordination between PICPA and non-CPA communities. Pathways and linkages for these communities will not be possible at this juncture due to prevailing laws governing the profession.

### SINGAPORE



#### Background

The Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants (ISCA), in collaboration with the AAT UK, introduced the ISCA Accredited Accounting Technician (ISCA-AAT) qualification in 2016.

The skills-based qualification was aimed at offering aspiring accounting technicians the opportunity to equip themselves with relevant skill sets to meet the demand for competent accounting and finance staff to support senior levels of the profession.

The qualification consisted of three (3) levels: Foundation, Advanced and Professional. Flexibility was given to access the qualification either through the Foundation or Advanced levels, dependent on prior qualifications. On successful completion of the ISCA-AAT and 1-year of practical experience, the incumbent was eligible for Affiliate membership at ISCA, which attracts ISCA support and conversely, membership obligations. Various pathways exist to advance to higher membership categories at ISCA, if so desired.

Under a mutual recognition agreement with AAT, graduates of the ISCA-AAT were also eligible for AAT full membership.

#### Recent Developments

ISCA decided to discontinue the said qualification and revise its approach to ATs, including exploring the accreditation of the AAT UK qualification. Receipt of new student applications ceased from 1 February 2020 with transitional arrangements in place for existing students.

## SRI LANKA



### Background

The Association of Accounting Technicians of Sri Lanka (AAT Sri Lanka) was formed in 1987 by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka at the recommendation of a report by the Asian Development Bank. Its key focus is to develop middle level professional accountants. Currently, there are close to 30,000 students with about 6,000 members.

### Recent Developments

Members of AAT Sri Lanka with a minimum of 1-year work experience at an executive/managerial level are now recognised for admission to several Masters programs at the University of Ruhuna.

In 2018, AAT Sri Lanka signed a reciprocal recognition arrangement with IPA Australia. AAT members are now eligible for IPA membership.

AAT Sri Lanka undertakes a curriculum review of its qualification every five (5) years. As a result, a new syllabus was introduced in 2019.

As part of its digitalisation journey, AAT Sri Lanka is introducing on-line teaching. There is also heightened engagement with relevant stakeholders through the use of social media.

## UNITED KINGDOM



### Background

The Association of Accounting Technicians in the United Kingdom (AAT UK) is a professional body for accounting technicians, working across the globe, with around 50,000 qualified members and 80,000 students in more than 100 countries.

AAT UK was established in 1980 by five (5) sponsoring UK-based PAOs, namely: ACCA, CIMA<sup>6</sup>, CIPFA, ICAEW and ICAS<sup>7</sup>. The sponsorship relationship with these bodies ceased in 2017. However, an operational relationship remains with exemptions available into the qualification programs of these organisations for those who have successfully completed the Professional Diploma in Accounting Level 4 of the AAT qualification. A third of these students take this route, which is a recognised fast track to chartered status with these UK-based accountancy bodies.

AAT works with more than 500 AAT approved training providers and has over 4,000 licensed members in the UK. Besides the accounting qualifications, AAT also offers a range of bookkeeping and business skills qualifications. AAT's designations include MAAT (AAT full membership) or AATQB (AAT bookkeeping membership). In the Middle East, AAT also offers an Advanced Award in Value Added Tax for the Gulf region.

AAT members work across different sectors of the economy ranging from private to public.

### Recent Developments

In the past few years, the UK government has raised the profile and funding for apprenticeships to improve skills across all sectors of the economy. The AAT qualification can be used to provide the 'knowledge' part of the apprenticeship, with the 'skills' and 'behaviours' elements added on by training providers. The scheme attracts 2,000 or around 10% of students, annually.

Apprenticeship involves working at least 30 hours a week with an employer while simultaneously studying for the accounting qualification. The AAT tuition will be delivered by a training provider arranged by the employer.

Each apprenticeship involves an End Point Assessment (EPA) which has two (2) components: a computerised test covering all the learning, plus a portfolio of evidence that is then used in an oral test with an examiner. AAT UK is an End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) recognised by the UK government for the purpose of providing EPAs for accounting apprenticeships.

<sup>6</sup> Chartered Institute of Management Accountants

<sup>7</sup> Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland

## APPENDIX: COUNTRY UPDATES

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(continued from page 29)



The program is funded by an Apprenticeship Levy (i.e. a tax on larger employers) that if not used on apprenticeships will remain with the government. Non-levy paying employers (i.e. smaller employers) may share the cost of training and assessing their apprentices with government through 'co-investment'. The co-investment rate for such employers is the payment of 5% towards the cost of apprenticeship training, with the government paying the balance.

Further, a key trend in the UK appears to be that employers are looking to investing in school leaver schemes more than graduate schemes.

## UNITED KINGDOM and INTERNATIONAL



### Background

The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) provides multiple entry points to available qualifications and hence membership.

This includes ACCA's Foundations in Accountancy (FIA). Individuals have the flexibility to choose from a range of entry level qualifications which will help develop relevant technical knowledge and practical skills required to perform in roles usually associated with ATs. Certificates and diplomas are awarded as they progress through the FIA which can either lead to the Certified Accounting Technician (CAT) or the full ACCA professional qualifications. The CAT designation is awarded on successful completion of examinations, relevant work experience and ethics requirements. From the CAT designation, a pathway exists to progress to the full professional qualification.

### Recent Developments

ACCA often partner with others to deliver these studies and qualifications, including through Joint Examination Schemes, an arrangement whereby ACCA collaborates with national Professional Accountancy Organisations (PAOs) to provide qualifications adapted to ensure local relevance.

Under these schemes, students register with both ACCA and the national PAO and are thereby able to satisfy the examination criteria for membership of both. Fourteen (14) schemes currently operate in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and Asia, with ten (10) providing for both the FIA and ACCA qualifications, and four (4) offering only the latter.

By way of example of international involvement:

- In Rwanda, ACCA worked with the Institute of Certified Public Accountants (ICPAR) to develop their new AT qualification – a priority under ICPAR's strategy to contribute to broader Rwanda country objectives. These objectives include growing the number of fully qualified accounting professionals, and responding directly to the need for 5,000 well-trained finance personnel in the public sector (through the offer of a distinct public finance management module).
- In Malaysia, annually an average of 1,500 students register to complete the CAT qualification and most of those that qualify will progress to the full professional qualification.
- In Cambodia, ACCA has partnered with the local institute for many years – see the Cambodia Country Update.





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