Apprentice fees case studies

With university fees set to rise and graduate jobs at an all-time low, bright school leavers are looking at alternatives to a university degree.

In the case of professions such as accountancy, an apprenticeship could yield great returns. Apprentices study the AAT Accounting Qualification whilst working in an accounting or finance role.

Once qualified there are generous exemptions from the chartered accountancy qualifications - which means young people can often qualify much quicker than someone with a university degree.

An apprentice is an employee who earns a salary and works alongside experienced staff to get job-specific skills. At the same time, apprentices also study towards a nationally-recognised qualification in their chosen field. Apprenticeships are not just limited to industries such as plumbing, painting and hairdressing. There is also the opportunity to enter professional industries - like accountancy - with vocational courses such as AAT.

To find out more about AAT and accountancy apprenticeships, please visit aat.org.uk

**Rebecca Cox, 19, of Birmingham**

“I had always wanted to work in accountancy, however, I didn’t feel that university was the right choice for me. I discovered AAT whilst researching accountancy courses and felt the combination of work experience and studying was the best route into the profession.

After finishing my GCSEs, at 16-years-old, I started the AAT Accounting Qualification and an apprenticeship with Birmingham based property consultancy Bruton Knowles, as an accounts junior. Soon after, I successfully secured a new role with Sertec - the manufacturing group - as an accounts administrator. When applying for the role at Sertec, I definitely feel that AAT gave me an advantage because I had a better understanding of what the employer wanted from me.”

**Sophie Kennedy, 18, of Sheffield**

“My sister was studying AAT and encouraged me to take the same path. Her enthusiasm and praise for the course left me in no doubt that I wanted to study the vocational qualification.

Young people under 19 can train for free, whereas university has tuition fees and the probability of getting into debt is massive. Another reason that I chose to study AAT is because I feel it’s the quickest way of being a qualified accountant. There is the opportunity to gain practical skills and use them in the workplace once you find a job.

I had just left school after finishing my GCSEs and went straight into studying AAT full time. After completing the level two and three in just 12 months, I then switched to evening classes when I found a role as an accounts assistant for Ponsford, a furniture company in Sheffield.

I have no regrets about choosing AAT as I will end up with a well-respected and well recognised qualification in a short space of time, which will enable me to get on within my career. I think more young people should consider a vocational qualification as an alternative to university because there is always a danger of wasting time on subjects that aren’t related to the field you want to work.”

Ashley Miles, Sophie’s manager at Ponsford Ltd said, “When I saw on Sophie’s CV that she was studying AAT, it immediately made her stand out amongst the other candidates. I am AAT-qualified
myself and I know the excellent grounding it gives to a young accountant. Sophie is gaining relevant practical skills while earning and learning, and she won’t be saddled with a huge student debt in years to come. I would always recommend this career path to someone wishing to become a qualified accountant. AAT gives generous exemptions for the ACA, ACCA, and CIMA qualifications, and with the practical experience she has gained, she will be an asset to any employer.”

Alex Pattison, 19, of York

“I was doing A-Levels and expected to go to university after completing them. I discovered the AAT and it became clear that it was the best route into the profession. In my opinion, classroom learning has little to do with the real world, so I decided against university and left college.

I wanted to combine gaining work experience with learning new skills and so I found an apprenticeship for a trainee finance assistant at H Q N Ltd in York - a company which provides training and consultancy solutions.

I started studying AAT on day release and I found it interesting to build practical skills and apply them to my job on a daily basis. Because I am doing a qualification directly linked to the workplace, I have a broader understanding of why I do certain procedures. Also, my employer has been very supportive and I will be rewarded with a pay rise after every AAT level I successfully complete.”