

Resource Pack

IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE IT IS IMPORTANT THAT OUR FINANCES ARE IN ORDER - THAT'S WHERE ACCOUNTANTS COME IN!



In association with:

Grant Thornton

You probably have a perception of Accountants – male, suited and probably a bit dull? If that is what you're thinking, think again! Accountants work across a range of industries with all sorts of people and are central to a company's success.

If you have a head for maths and are good with solving problems and making sense of things, this is perfect career path for you.

Chartered accountants provide trustworthy information about financial records, and the range of different industries and businesses they work in is as wide as it is surprising (everything from law firms to record labels need accountants).

In general it is your job to maximise a company's profits, so accountants are considered very important.

But it's not just about putting numbers into a spreadsheet, it's about understanding the figures and communicating them back to your client or employer. Chartered accountants are talented and determined people who use their skills in the same way as lawyers, engineers or architects to find the best solution for their clients.

WHY BECOME A CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT?

In any job you want to show you are the best, and with accountancy this means becoming a chartered accountant. There are lots of different types of accountant – but chartered accountants are different.

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HOW TO BECOME A CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

The ICAEW are a world leader of the accountancy and finance professions and should be your first port of call for taking your first steps in accountancy.

They provide the ACA qualification, a world-leading professional qualification.

Find out more about the qualification here:

[HTTP://CAREERS.ICAEW.COM/SCHOOL-STUDENTS-LEAVERS/WHAT-IS-ACCOUNTANCY/WHAT-IS-THE-ACA](http://careers.icaew.com/school-students-leavers/what-is-accountancy/what-is-the-aca)

You might be thinking this all sounds like the only route this career is via university, but as a School leaver there are several routes open to you, of which university is just one:



SCHOOL LEAVER

University isn't right for everyone, but you can start the ACA qualification straight after A-levels.

To do so you will need to gain a training agreement with an employer, who will be willing to take you on while you gain the ACA.

You should start looking for an employer in your first year of A-levels, and be expected to go through an application process which may involve completing some numeracy tests.

Starting salaries vary depending on the size and location of the organisation but after your A-levels you can usually expect salaries to range from £12,000 – £18,000 per year.

Taking this one at this stage will mean a longer training period than the three-year period that graduates undertake. Studying for the ACA is demanding and four or five year agreements will give you extra time to study towards your modules and gain the work experience you need to have a successful career as an ICAEW Chartered Accountant.

You can find current training vacancies at:

[WWW.ICAEWTRAININGVACANCIES.COM/](http://www.icaewtrainingvacancies.com/)

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UNIVERSITY

University life might appeal to you and is still a great route into accountancy.

Basically you can study for any degree you want, but most employers will be looking for a First or a 2:1 at the end of course.

Following your degree many employers run graduate schemes to give you the leg up you need to start working, and succeed, in the field.

If accountancy is something you know you want to do you can study AND start working in the industry, with Strategic Partnership Programmes between the ICAEW and some universities.

These combine real life, workplace experience with a degree. Programmes range from those helping you secure an internship to ones that are fully integrated with a career at a top professional firm.

Some of the current partnership programmes are at the following universities:

- **Bournemouth University**
- **Cass Business School**
- **Leeds University**
- **Durham University**
- **University of Liverpool**
- **Manchester Metropolitan University**

Most students will begin to look for an employer to start a training agreement with during their third year of University.

Starting salaries vary depending on the size and location of the firm, but graduates can usually expect salaries to range from £18,000 – £26,000 per year.

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HIGHER APPRENTICESHIPS

A newer route into accountancy is apprenticeships, which you can also take through the ICAEW. You can earn while you learn straight after GCSE's or A-levels working towards a qualification while starting a job.

ICAEW offer two options:

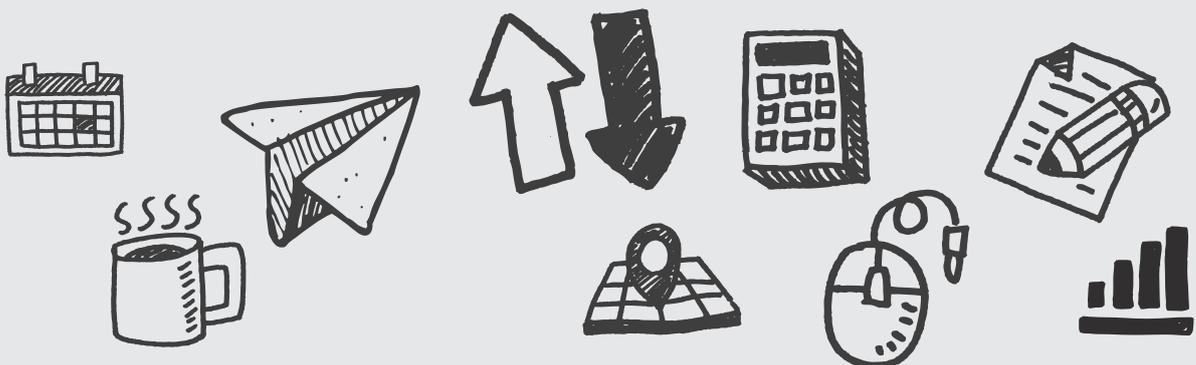
- Higher Apprenticeship in Assurance/Audit;
and
- Higher Apprenticeship in Tax.

You'll learn a mix of accounting and finance knowledge and a wide range of practical business skills and personal competencies – gained through on- and off-the-job learning, classroom tuition, personal development and studying for a qualification.

At the end of your Higher Apprenticeship, you'll gain a number of certificates to help demonstrate your determination and achievement.

Depending on the route you take these can include:

- Diploma in Accounting and Business;
- Diploma in Audit Practice or Diploma in Tax Practice;
- ICAEW CFAB – the first six exams of our chartered accountancy qualification, the ACA;
- and
- the Professional Services Higher Apprenticeship Certificate.



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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR ME?

This route into accountancy has several direct benefits.

The qualification is the equivalent to the first year of university and is also the first six exams of ICAEW's chartered accountancy qualification, the ACA whilst coming without the student debt!

After completing your Higher Apprenticeship with ICAEW CFAB, you could continue your studies towards ICAEW's leading chartered accountancy qualification, the ACA; so it could be a stepping stone towards your career as an ICAEW Chartered Accountant.

Also, former Apprentices do rather well earning, on average, £100,000 more than those without.

On top of this it could help you develop your management aspirations – 56% of employers say that their apprentices have gone on to management positions within the organisation.

IS AN APPRENTICESHIP RIGHT FOR ME?

This all sounds good, but you are still unsure as to whether this is right for you? This route is right for you if you:

- **Live in England or Wales and are not in full-time education;**
- **You have just finished your A-levels or have just finished school;**
- **you've completed your BTEC or similar qualification;**
- **you've never been to university and don't plan on going;**
- **you are ambitious and talented;**
- **you want to start a career in the accountancy or finance profession.**

Tips for getting a job

THINKING OF GETTING A JOB AS AN ACCOUNTANT, BUT NEED SOME HELP WITH HOW TO GET STARTED? WE ASKED THE EXPERTS AT GRANT THORNTON FOR SOME TOP TIPS TO HELP GET A DREAM ACCOUNTING CAREER.



BRING YOUR PERSONALITY TO THE JOB!

Accountancy is a people business, remember to think about your interests and passions, what can YOU bring to your role as an accountant.



UNDERSTAND THE STORIES BEHIND THE NUMBERS?

To have a successful career in accountancy it's important to be really passionate about business, finance and the way the world works. Wanting to understand the stories behind the numbers is key to being successful.



GET SOME WORK EXPERIENCE

Work experience is really important if you want to gain a role in the current job market, whether it is actuarial or not, any work experience is essential. It is not enough these days to just have the qualifications employers want, what else are you bringing to the table?



ASK FOR ADVICE

Whether this is from the IFoA careers department, your school careers service, your university careers service or from one of the IFoA's Career Ambassadors, the more you know about the career the better informed you will be.



RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

There are so many options out there for a career in accountancy. Talk to people, be bold in who you approach, and make informed decisions.

Find out more about School Leavers careers
with Grant Thornton at:

[HTTPS://TRAINEES.GRANT-THORNTON.CO.UK/PROGRAMMES/SCHOOL-LEAVERS](https://trainees.grant-thornton.co.uk/programmes/school-leavers)

Case Study

WHAT DO YOU DO?

I've been here since 2011, and I am doing the school leaver route.

I spent two years doing my AAT and now I am doing the ACCA, which takes about two and a half to three years. I should qualify next February if I pass all my exams.

I work in Audits and I am going through my training contracts. When I started it meant I was pretty much at clients back to back with a little bit of time in the office. Audits tend to last a week to as much as three weeks and are done by teams of two to five people.

For the first year or two years I was one of the more junior members of the team but that still entailed talking to the clients a lot, learning on the go, as you would have awkward conversations with clients when they ask 'what's this?' And you don't really understand it yourself. But it was a good learning experience.

What I found when I started, everyone I work with is in the age range of 18 to 30 so when I started it was really nice to be working with young people who were coaching me through it. You don't feel intimidated because they are your age, with your likes and interests.

Now I am in my third year I lead on the audits. I still have a manager above me but in terms of the nitty-gritty work I lead a team of around three people and report direct to the manager. I still have the time at the clients that I had when I started but now I'll have two or three weeks in the office getting all the reporting done and having more forward thinking conversations with clients about where their business is going.

WAS THIS AN AREA OF WORK YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO GET INTO?

I've always liked maths so I went to sixth form and did maths, further maths and economics because that is what I liked and what I was planning to do was go to university and do maths and economics. I had all my places sorted but I was never interested particularly in university and it was just by chance that Grant Thornton came to my college and talked to one of my friends in accounts about school leaver options. That you get a uni equivalent qualification, and from there I looked into Grant Thornton and accountancy and I went from there.



Case Study

Colleges kind of only gear you up for university, so I was really just doing what I was told and expected of me. My parents especially were pushing me to consider other options, because my brother was at university as well, and that there was other stuff out there. I looked at other firms and applied to them and discovered this training route was worth doing.

It is worth knowing that you qualify quicker than you would if you went to university and did the same thing.

We've just had a graduate join our office, and he went to my college. In fact he was the person from accounts that told me about Grant Thornton. Now he's three years my junior but we are the same age, and he's doing the same qualification it's just I am three years ahead. And I have not got the debt, I've bought a house when a graduate could not be doing that and generally I am further along in my career. What was it that attracted you to Grant Thornton?

WHAT IS IT LIKE AS SCHOOL LEAVER AT GRANT THORNTON?

Because I did the AAT and it's kind of a way to ease you in to it, they are smaller exams and with less of a build up so you get used to juggling client commitments and working and socialising with doing revision, so by the time you get to doing the ACCA or whichever one it is you have had all that experience already.

They are very understanding. You get study leave, and we get sent out on block release to the people who provide our training Kaplan, who are amazing. So you go away a week at a time, so you are not working then, and before exams you get a day's free study leave. We also get a lot of holiday time and here you can also earn time off in lieu, so that's another way you can make sure you have enough time off to feel comfortable before your exam.

The thing is your college studies complement your work so much. You'll do something at work and then it will be spoken about at college and you'll think 'I already have an idea about that' and vice versa. Everyone is very keen to help and the teams you are working on, everyone is going through the training programme as well.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING YOU'VE DONE ON THE SCHOOL LEAVER ROUTE?

I got involved with Spilling The Beans, which is our trainee blog. Here we are well encouraged to get involved with other things outside of the job, and this is what I decided to get involved in. Again they make sure you have enough time to honour those commitments.

Being part of that and being part a lot of people's journeys through the recruitment process and seeing them start, I have found that really interesting.

Case Study

The use of social media is really encouraged here and Spill The Beans is an external site but we also have internal sites, and I have encouraged the leaders in our area to blog so we can get a better idea of what they are doing. It's an open culture.

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS TIME?

I really enjoy working in audits so I would like to be a manager here.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO IS IN A SIMILAR SITUATION THAT YOU WERE?

Speak to your careers advisor at college and do your research on the different school leaver options out there, as there are a lot of them.

Everyone has slightly different options, so it is worth knowing and try to talk to someone from a local office. The best thing to do is get information from people who have been through it and work there.

A lot of people I speak to seem to think that by doing this they are limiting themselves and closing a lot of doors but I have found the total opposite. I

don't think I am confined to a career in accountancy, if I want to get into teaching the ACCA allows you to move on to a degree, so that door is still open.



Find out more about school leavers career options at Grant Thornton on their website:

[HTTP://TRAINEES.GRANT-THORNTON.CO.UK/](http://trainees.grant-thornton.co.uk/)

Useful Resources

If you need more help with your career choices, you can find a wealth of support and opportunities on the following websites:



GRANT THORNTON

Grant Thornton is an innovative and award-winning accountancy firm offering a range of career opportunities for school leavers.

[HTTPS://TRAINEES.GRANT-THORNTON.CO.UK/](https://trainees.grant-thornton.co.uk/)



ICAEW

As a body ICAEW provide training and qualifications for people to become Chartered Accountants.



THEBIGCHOICE.COM

Find quality advice and opportunities in apprenticeships, part time jobs and training on this youth careers portal.



SCHOOL LEAVERS GUIDE

This interactive app guide brings together expert advice, guidance on career steps and positions from top employers on tablet and smartphone.



NATIONAL CAREERS SERVICE

The official place for careers advice and information in the UK.



NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SERVICE

Everything you need on apprenticeships and the best vacancies on offer.