



How study support materials helped me pass my exams

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Using AAT's study material made exam prep easier for accounts assistant Ceara Stephenson. Here's how it can make life easier for you too.

Ceara Stephenson was halfway through her A-levels when she discovered her true career path. She had been studying applied science, PE, maths and finance at AS level, but found she enjoyed finance so much it seemed futile to continue doing anything else.

"There just didn't seem any point completing the other subjects, I just knew what I wanted to do. I loved studying finance and knew I wanted to train as an accountant," she recalls.

Hopes of being the boss

Stephenson opted for studying with AAT because of the globally recognised status and because she knew it would be a major stepping stone for her career. "If you've qualified through AAT, you're sorted," she explains.

Since first embarking on an apprenticeship at Tax Assist in Huddersfield in September 2017, Stephenson has not looked back. Juggling studying while learning the ropes as an apprentice, she passed her AAT Foundation Certificate in Accounting (Level 2) in May 2018, followed by an AAT Advanced Diploma in Accounting (Level 3) eight months later.

Now 20, Stephenson works as an accounts assistant at Bradford-based TIB Accountancy Services, and is currently studying for a Level 4 qualification. She hopes one day to run her own accountancy practice.

Greenlight tests were invaluable

But it has not been an easy process, she says, especially when it comes to exams. Stephenson initially found Level 2 "fairly simple", but as subsequent levels required more in-depth answers and theory-based explanations to exam questions, she says it became much harder to pass.

"Transitioning to a new level has been challenging," she explains. "Each new level requires more detail than the previous one, especially with exams and assessments. They're looking for more explanation and detail each time to show you really understand the theory."

Stephenson however, has taken it all in her stride. She makes good use of the support material provided by AAT, including YouTube videos, assessment criteria and practice questions. The greenlight mock test in particular has been invaluable for Stephenson, because it shows up any weaknesses and highlights the areas she needs to work on.

Enlisting help and utilising free time

Ultimately though, it's all about revising. "You just have to keep revising over and over again," Stephenson insists. "That's what is going to help you pass."

Often revising during her lunch breaks at work, Stephenson says she feels comfortable enlisting the help of co-workers, who are always happy to help out. "It's actually what I'm most proud of – being able to study and work at the same time. I've been able to juggle both. And it felt great passing my Level 3, too. I'd been working so hard on it and it was such a nice feeling when I passed. All my hard work paid off."

Key takeaways

- Revise for at least one hour a day. Any less and your learning won't stick.
- Don't be discouraged if it takes a while to adjust to a new level. It can take a bit to get used to the extra level of detail needed.
- Take the practice questions so you get used to the format and can perfect your responses. Once you start passing the practice questions easily, you'll know you're there.
- Don't stress if you fail an exam. Just carry on and resit. It's not the end of the world.

Further reading

- **The trick with synoptics is...** (https://www.aatcomment.org.uk/learning/study-tips/the-trick-with-aat-synoptics-is/?utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=SocialSignIn)
- **9 Writing tips to help you through your studies** (<https://www.aatcomment.org.uk/learning/study-tips/foundation-certificate-aq2016/ready-set-go/9-writing-tips-to-help-you-through-your-studies/>)
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