

Employer Newsletter

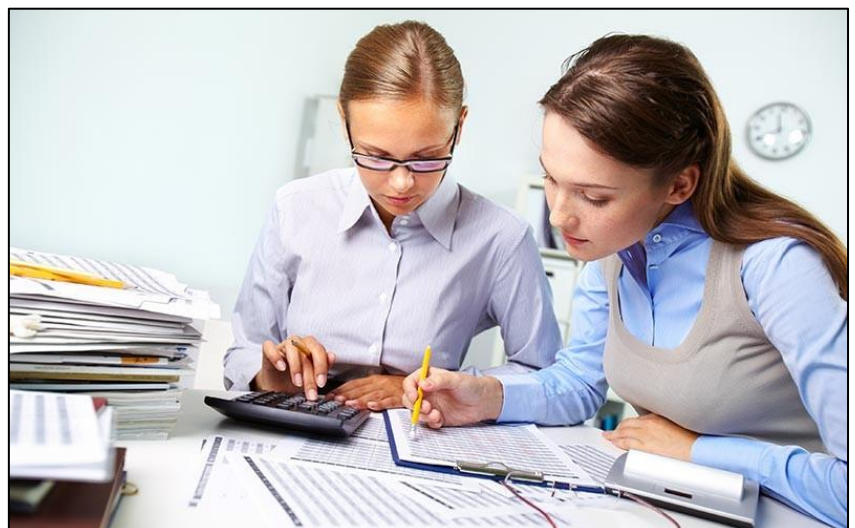
Changes to AAT L3 Assistant Accountant Apprenticeship Standard

At the end of June a new apprenticeship standard was launched for AAT L3 Assistant Accountant which will come into force from 1st August. Here is a brief update of what this means:

- The funding band has increased from £8,000 to £12,000.
- The AAT qualification is now a mandated part of the apprenticeship meaning exam fees and subscriptions can be included within the funding.
- Some additions to the skills and behaviours including, diversity, inclusion, cultural awareness, cyber security, wellbeing, resilience and sustainability.
- Understanding social media and its pitfalls is a new skill requirement within the communication part of the standard.
- Changes to the End Point Assessment – now containing 40 knowledge based MCQs based on a scenario and will be open book allowing students to apply their learning.
- The standard sets out what duties and apprentice should have and we will need to review these carefully before signing up an apprentice
- Changes to EPA making the portfolio less reflective but extend the interview significantly
- Apprentices can receive a 'merit' as an overall outcome on the apprenticeship (currently it's Fail, Pass, Distinction).

We invited all employers to a consultation to consider the opportunity these changes give us to improve our programmes. Thanks to all those who attended and shared their thoughts on our proposals.

Based on the feedback, employers wanted us to build more of the L2 knowledge into the L3 programme. This helps apprentices to develop a sound basis for their level 3 learning. There was also support to include a formal exam rehearsal day within the programme, where students can complete and exam in exam conditions, and have it debriefed and marked to improve their exam readiness.



Feedback was also received to include skills days early on in the programme to get an apprentice ready for the world of work. Including Microsoft and excel skills, and behaviours such as work etiquette and professional communication. These initial skills built should help the apprentice settle into their professional life quickly – 'kicking off their career in finance'.

AAT L3 Programme will be as follows;

Introduction day	1 day as per current programme
Level 2 bookkeeping	4 day course
ISP Kicking off your career in finance (upfront)	2 day course
Tax Processes for Businesses	3 day course with 1 question day
Management Accounting Techniques	1 L2 intro day, 6 day course and 1 question day
Fin Acc: Prep Financial Statements	8 day course and 1 question day
Business Environment	1 day bridging the gap between the old level 2 and the new Business Awareness module
Bus Awareness	4 day course and 1 question day
Adv Synoptic	3 day course
ISP Remaining skills days as per existing schedule	5 days spread through programme
Project support and interview prep	1 day
43 days	

* for comparison the existing programme is 39 days

AAT L4 Exemptions from INAC

The AAT have recently stated that L4 apprentices sitting PDSY (Professional Synoptic) under Quals22 will be given an exemption from the INAC (Internal Accounting Controls) exam. INAC is assumed knowledge embedded within the PDSY exam, as well as for our AUDT (Audit) course. Therefore, we will require all apprentices to attend the INAC course as per their current learning plans, but we recommend they do not sit the formal exam. We will require all apprentices to pass a mock exam for INAC following the course to ensure they have sufficient knowledge for the AUDT (if applicable) and PDSY courses.

Funding Rules Update

The funding rules which govern all apprenticeships are updated each year. Unlike last year, the funding rules have been released nice and early for us to put in place systems to comply. Whilst there are no significant changes this year here are a couple of the headlines are as follows:

Update	What you need to do:
Initial assessment Employers to be involved and sign-off on initial assessments. We must document that the price has been discussed. Employer must agree to participate in progress reviews.	Participate in the initial assessment process and sign-off on the decisions made about the programme including pricing prior to the learner starting. (We recommend that this is shared with the line manager as well as the HR/ apprentice manager) Attend progress reviews, sharing feedback about how the apprentice has been developing and what they still need to work on.
Off the Job Training We are responsible for ensuring that there is a plan for active learning to take place every calendar month of the apprenticeship. Where there is no plan for active learning in a month a break in learning must be used.	Support your apprentices to complete off the job learning every month of their apprenticeship. If courses are not scheduled the coach will agree suitable learning with you and the apprentice.

Initial Assessments at Sign-up

The Funding Rules require us to carry out a thorough assessment of all apprentices' knowledge and skills before they start their apprenticeship programme. This is to make sure that they have the best possible chance of success and do not duplicate learning which they have already completed.

While these assessments will not take up much time (approximately 20-30 minutes each), it is crucial for students to invest the necessary time and effort to provide accurate and thoughtful responses, as these assessments reflect their starting point.



Skills Assessment - Unleashing Potential

What is it?	Why we use it?	How is it done?
The skills assessment aims to gather more information about the student's accounting responsibilities and any non-relevant accountancy experience they may have had. It also evaluates their performance against the skills and behaviors associated with the relevant apprenticeship standards.	The assessment helps determine if the student has substantial room for development, making them eligible for the program. If a student already demonstrates these skills and behaviors, an apprenticeship may not be the most suitable option. Additionally, the assessment allows students to outline their career goals and aspirations so we can help ensure the programme fits with these.	We use an online form that requires written answers. It is important to note that the skills assessment also evaluates the student's writing skills, so full sentences should be used when completing the form.

Maths and English Assessments - Strengthening the Foundation

What is it?	Why we use it?	How is it done?
This is a check that the student is currently performing at a suitable level of maths and English to be successful in the apprenticeship. It identifies whether these key skills have atrophied since completing GCSE's, or flags issues where a student is studying in a second language.	If a student scores below Level 2 (roughly GCSE level), they will be asked to complete additional diagnostic assessments. These assessments help identify any knowledge gaps and allow for the implementation of additional support tailored to the student's needs, ensuring they can enhance these skills throughout their program. If an apprentice fails to achieve the level 2 we may also need to consider the appropriateness of the program.	Students need to complete the initial maths and English assessments assigned to them on the BKSBS (Basic Key Skills Builder) portal. These are online tests with multiple choice questions or requiring short written answers.

Exemption Assessments - Building a Solid Foundation

What is it?	Why we use it?	How is it done?
A check that exemptions claimed are reflected in the students' knowledge. These online assessments include sample questions from the relevant exam.	Learning gaps arising from inappropriate exemptions is a significant factor in students encountering difficulties later and dropping out of the programme. We ask for a minimum of 50% in each assessment. However, if the student does not achieve this score, additional support will be implemented within their program for that specific module.	This is online test. While the test is expected to take around an hour, students can complete it in an open-book format without any time constraints. Once completed, the test should be returned to us for marking.

Cognassist - Unlocking Cognitive Potential

What is it?	Why we use it?	How is it done?
Completing the Cognassist neurodiversity assessment allows students to investigate the eight cognitive domains that influence their thinking and learning.	This assessment provides valuable insights into how their brain works and helps identify different learning and study techniques that will benefit them throughout their studies. It also enables us to identify any additional learning needs within these domains, ensuring the correct support is implemented throughout the student's program.	It is an online assessment done directly on the Cognassist platform. It takes 30 minutes and requires full focus as it measures the time of reaction and the speed of answers provided.

We believe that personalised assessments are crucial in each student's journey towards success. By understanding their starting point, strengthening foundation skills, evaluating exemptions, and unlocking their cognitive potential, the appropriate support can be tailored to each student's unique needs, maximizing their chances of achieving their goals.

New CFAB School Leaver L4 Apprenticeship Programme

We are excited to announce we have added a L4 Apprenticeship programme covering the CFAB qualification to our portfolio of products, covering the first six exams of the ICAEW ACA syllabus. This programme has been designed with school-leavers in mind, ensuring that there is appropriate time to digest the learning required and providing a mix of face to face and live online tuition. We are running the programme from September 2023 in our Reading Centre and will look to provide this within the £8,000 funding band.

- The program starts with a four day 'Fundamentals in Accounting and Assurance' course which covers the basics of bookkeeping and assurance
- Some modules are split out into two or three phases utilising both classroom and virtual classroom delivery allowing the apprentice time to digest and practice key concepts
- Some modules are longer in duration than our standard course lengths for the equivalent exam, allowing the learner more time to digest and practice the content

Unit	Total days	Incentre	Virtual class	Est . timing for Sept 23 intake
Fundamentals in Accounting and Assurance (Bookkeeping)	4	4	0	Sept 23
Assurance	5	2	3	2 blocks Sept 23 and Oct 23
Accounting	10	7	3	3 blocks across Nov, Dec, Jan
Business Technology and Finance	4	2	2	Mar-24
Principles. of Tax	6	4	2	Jul-24
Law	4	0	4	Aug-24
Management Information	6	4	2	Oct-24
Role Sim (EPA)	4	0	4	Feb-25
Impact Skills Programme	5	5		5 days spread through programme
Total	48	28	20	

We would be delighted to chat with you about this programme and the benefits it could bring. Please do contact your client partner should you want to discuss this further.

Updates to L4 and L7 Standards and Funding Bands

Having now received the updated standard for L3, IFATE has set it's agenda to update the L4 and L7 standards and associated funding bands. Nothing is certain yet, but there are discussions of mandating the qualifications within the standard allowing the funding to be used for the exams.

There is expected to be further announcements on the by November 2023 for Level 4 and March 2024 for Level 7. We will, of course, consult with employers once we have more details.

Recruiting an apprentice

We often receive queries about recruitment including the best way to recruit a new apprentice. One tried and tested approach is the Find an Apprenticeship site <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>. Many schools, colleges and universities direct their learners to this site to help them identify apprenticeship opportunities with local employers.

If this is a service you would like help with, we can set this up for you, free of charge, please do get in touch.

We also regularly attend recruitment fairs and schools to promote apprenticeships. If you are recruiting, please feel free to share with us your adverts and job descriptions and we can promote them at these events while we talk about apprenticeships. Please contact your client partner if this is something you would like to pursue.

How you can help your apprentice

We have found that the employers who have the best success and retention rates with their apprentices are those where the line manager is closely involved in progress reviews and works with the coach to keep the apprentice motivated and on track. You can help by:

- ✓ Sharing workplace targets with the coach so that objectives are relevant
- ✓ Making sure that you do not approve holiday which clashes with study and exams
- ✓ Managing workload around exam dates
- ✓ Reminding the apprentice that the skills and behaviours are key to their development
- ✓ Linking the apprenticeship milestones with your internal reviews and rewarding those who meet them

We value your input into our programme design so please do let us know if you have any feedback on the apprenticeship programme and the content of the skills programme. If you would like to observe a skills day or would like more information about the content please let us know. It is very important to us that these modules provide learning which helps apprentices to be more effective in the workplace. Your feedback is invaluable in allowing us to achieve this.

FI learn changes

Following feedback, we are currently working on a few changes to FI learn which will hopefully make life easier for you and your apprentices.

This includes a new slicker timesheet for apprentices and the ability for line managers to sign off reviews.