



Should I work in audit?

WE LOOK AT WHAT AUDIT IS AND WHY IT MAY APPEAL TO YOU

There are three main types of audit – compliance, operational and financial:

1. A compliance audit is a detailed review to find out whether a business or organisation is complying with regulatory requirements.
2. An operational audit looks at how a business or organisation is run, with view to improving efficiency and profitability.
3. A financial audit evaluates a company's or organisation's financial accounts to provide assurance to shareholders and others that those accounts have been prepared properly and that they are a fair representation of the company's/organisation's financial position.

Larger organisations and companies employ their own internal auditors; however, financial auditing is carried out by external auditors working for accountancy firms.

External auditors examine company accounts, identify risks, assess the company's financial reporting systems, assess business processes, analyse financial data and make recommendations for any improvements that may be needed.

Working in audit

Rather than choosing an audit role, former AAT student **Will Mann**, an audit senior at accountancy and business advisory firm Dains Accountants Limited, says he just "fell into it". Looking back, he says, he's very glad he did.

"Audit is almost like a training ground for accountants. You get to work on different entity types – corporates,

SMEs, charities, academies, etc – across a wide range of industries. And that experience and exposure isn't as easy to gain when you're working in industry," he argues.

Will is glad his career path led him into external auditing and he really enjoys his job. "I'd actually recommend starting off in an audit role because it gives you valuable and varied experience. Whether or not you see yourself working in audit forever, I still believe it's the absolute best place to begin your career in accountancy."

Starting out

Will says he had three career aspirations at school – programmer, psychologist or accountant.

"I eliminated psychology because although I enjoyed it as an A-Level subject, I couldn't see myself doing it for a

career," he recalls. "Programming was a strong contender, but I chose to keep it as a hobby, as it's more easily self-taught, which isn't the case with accounting."

In 2018, Will secured his first accountancy job, starting as an audit trainee working for a small accountancy firm in Leamington Spa. It gave him a valuable introduction into audit and he gained valuable experience from the start by providing audit services to a variety of clients.

"Early in audit careers, the main areas of testing are typically controls and system testing, which is essentially how a business runs and ensures that its internal processes are efficient and secure," he explains. "It's an ideal place to start, because it's the baseline for all audit testing and it acts as a grassroots introduction to how businesses operate, which you can then build upon."

Laying the foundations

That first year, Will gained his AAT Level 2 Foundation Certificate in Accounting.

"At first, I didn't even know the difference between debit

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and credit – I had zero accounting knowledge," he admits. "But I was able to learn the fundamental concepts that would underpin the rest of my AAT and ACA study work."

Will went on to gain his AAT Level 3 (Advanced Diploma) and Level 4 (Professional Diploma). "Throughout the AAT levels, knowledge is built efficiently and methodically," he says. "Level 2 introduces key concepts; Level 3 expands on these and Level 4 rounds them off, so you can apply

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these valuable skills. I wouldn't have grasped these concepts or gained these lasting skills by studying a university degree."

A varied role

In January 2022, Will joined Dains Accountants, which has more than 300 employees working from offices in Birmingham, Stoke-on-

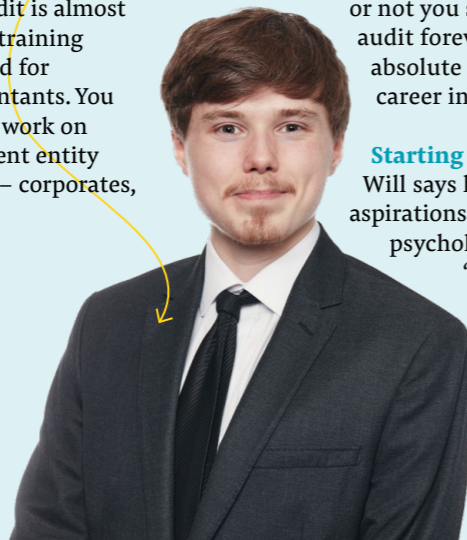
Trent, Derby and other Midlands locations. Will is now an audit senior and his clients are either SMEs, charities or education academies. "The best thing about audit is that my days are very varied," he says. "I could be working from home or visiting a client anywhere in the UK or working from our office in central Birmingham. Most days I work through tests in the audit file, talking to clients, taking part in internal planning meetings, technical training days or stock-takes."

To suit an external audit role you need to be a good problem-solver, says Will. "Things rarely work

perfectly first try, so you must be able to find other solutions," he explains. "Successful time management is also key, because we tend to be booked to be with a client for one or two weeks at a time, and all the work must be completed within that time. There's lots to get through and it can be difficult to find the time to finish off work when you've started working with the next client."

Good interpersonal skills are also essential, he says. "Normally you're working regularly with different clients, which means you must successfully work with all types of people. This can be a challenge at first, especially if you haven't had to do it before, but your confidence soon starts to grow and auditing gives you the opportunity to build that experience. You may not get that in other accounting roles." 20

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WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ROLES IN AUDIT?

Turn to page 28 for our article on internal audit – 'Partners not police: Why internal auditors have an important role in business.'