

Isosceles Graduate Trainee Accountant Scheme: What support is available?

Applying for a job in accounting and finance can be daunting, especially if an applicant has little to no experience in a related field.

In our latest blog, we ask Vicki, Account Director, Bhavini, Financial Controller, current ICAEW Graduate Trainee Accountant Ellen and CIMA Graduate Trainee Accountant Alex to elaborate on the support available for graduates at Isosceles.

Q: Can you tell us more about the two professional bodies chosen by Isosceles?

Vicki: Some of the graduate trainee accountants at Isosceles study for the [Chartered Institute of Management Accountants \(CIMA\)](#) qualification, which we aim for them to complete within three years.

I'm Isosceles' lead on CIMA and it's my job to make sure our graduates get through this qualification!

Graduates on this scheme must complete a combination of exams and practical work experience. In my role as a mentor, I like to organise webinars with representatives from the Institute to make sure the graduates understand what the course involves and what is expected of them.

The CIMA syllabus is split into **three pillars** and **three levels** and tested through 12 exams: nine "Objective Tests" of 90 minutes, and three three-hour case study exams.

Bhavini: Some of our graduates study the [Associate Chartered Accountant \(ACA\) professional qualification from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales \(ICAEW\)](#).

To qualify as an **ICAEW Chartered Accountant**, you must be able to demonstrate a range of accounting skills and practical experience which will include 450 days of practical work experience, so about 3 years. There are 15 exam modules and you must also be able to show your continued professional development and ethics and professional skepticism reviews.

Depending on what you have covered in your degree, you may be able to get exemptions for some early parts of both qualifications.

Q: How are graduates supported on a day-to-day basis?

Bhavini: We always aim to assign graduates a core client, which will give them a wide range of experience and professional progression.

As a mentor, I'm available to help with any issues that may affect a graduate's ability to work to their full potential. Our relationship is built on trust and so I'll generally check in with the account teams first, rather than micro-manage individuals. However, everyone must know there are people like me that they can go to if they need any help at any time.

Both ACA and CIMA graduates have a training partner who will sign off their portfolio of experience and recommend graduates for ICAEW or CIMA membership when they have finished their work experience and exams.

This training is a big investment in our people, and we want everyone to succeed. It is too late after three years to find out there has been a problem, so we're in close contact at every step to make sure everyone's doing OK.

Vicki: At Isosceles we have a strong support system available for graduates.

Bhavini and I help graduates with any work-related issues and provide advice and support whenever it is needed.

We find it's really helpful, and maybe a bit less daunting for graduates if they work with each other and also with more experienced trainees, so we do encourage them to try self-help first though, as we don't want to spoon-feed anyone!

Since we have been working from home in the post-Covid-19 world, our trainees have adapted their learning by arranging online revision, which I think has been helpful.

Q: As Graduate Trainee Accountants at Isosceles, how have you been supported?

Ellen: I joined Isosceles in September 2018 with no previous accounting and finance experience. I graduated with a degree in International Development with Quantitative Research Methods. So, no Accounting!

When I started, it was reassuring to get an online workbook at the start as I found it gave me a grounding in the basic principles of bookkeeping.

In terms of support, we get study leave to focus on examinations. Extra support is also available through ethics reviews, internal and external continued professional development, and six-monthly reviews on areas of development, soft skills, and practical experience.

The support from members of the Isosceles team has remained constant, and if I've had any difficulty I've been helped by my peers and senior colleagues.

Alex: I agree with Ellen. The bookkeeping course gave me the information I needed to start with a strong understanding of the basics of accounting.

I've found that the support system of the wider team means that graduates have access to accounting professionals with more experience, which could be their line manager, a financial controller or a senior graduate trainee accountant.

Q: Can you tell us a bit more about the main challenges the graduates at Isosceles face, and what support they are given?

Bhavini: Studying and working at Isosceles is a major fast track for your career, and a great opportunity to complete an accredited programme of study.

It's fair to say though that it can often be a challenge to deal with pressure from clients or the account team lead.

For these reasons, graduates must be aware that we are here to help with any issues that may affect a graduate's ability to complete outstanding tasks.

The company regularly looks at the client work trainees are doing so we can change it around to make sure they get to work on different parts of their syllabus. We also have weekly resourcing meetings so we can move workarounds and make sure no-one is overloaded and that we have cover for when they're off on study leave.

Ellen: We are expected to manage tasks across multiple clients, while also working through a rigorous programme of study, so it can be a challenge. It will be worth it though; I'm learning a lot, and it's a great qualification to have.

Q: Once qualified, do graduates tend to move into more senior positions?

Vicki: Absolutely. We want all our graduates to qualify and move into more senior roles. You don't know everything as soon as you qualify, but we do want our graduates to move through from Management Accountant up to Finance Director and be able to support our clients.

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