

A faster route to chartered accountant status

Flo Barrett is an assistant executive in audit and assurance on EY's school leaver programme.



A careers adviser suggested that an accountancy career might suit me. When an accountant visited my school to give a talk, I had a conversation with her that led to two days' work experience. I did basic jobs but I loved it. I then did work experience in the finance department at the telecoms company where my dad worked, to compare being an auditor to being a financial accountant. I also took part in ICAEW's BASE competition for schools and colleges.*

A curious mind

I applied for EY's school leaver programme and chose the audit and assurance option. This involves checking other organisations' accounts to ensure that they are not misleading and I knew from my work experience that it interested me. I have a curious mind and I like being able to investigate things. For example, we have to check that all the supporting documents for a set of accounts (eg the original invoices) are there.

Training and qualifications

The chance to get a professional qualification through ICAEW a year earlier than if I went

to university was appealing. I've already progressed to assistant executive, and in five years' time I'd like a management role – for which I'll need my ACA qualification. My training on the programme started with ICAEW's basic qualification, the certificate in finance, accounting and business (ICAEW CFAB). For each set of exams I spent two weeks at college or had two weeks off work for self study.

Working life

My job involves auditing government and public service organisations. I travel a lot, often staying in a hotel. In my first year I spent 80 per cent of my time away; now it's 35 per cent. I enjoy speaking to people so I like the face-to-face contact with clients. With some clients I'm the team leader, which involves checking that the rest of the team know what they're doing and keep an eye on work quality and timescales. I still have a social life; if I go to the pub on a weekday evening I often just have one drink and leave by 10.00 pm but this doesn't bother me. ¹

*For 16- to 19-year-olds, the competition gives a flavour of what it's like to work as a chartered accountant.