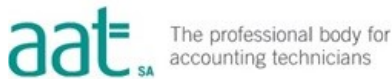


AAT(SA) uplifts accounting standards

The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) has partnered with the international AAT body to develop AAT(SA), a new locally-based professional body aimed at vastly improving the standards of accounting where the rubber hits the road - at the mid- and junior-tiers of both government and private enterprise.



At present, as Natalie Zimmelman, GM of AAT(SA) explains, "The South African economy and workforce face a dilemma in which the only qualifications that are readily accepted by business are degrees or diplomas. Certificates from Further Education and Training (FET) or vocational courses are often considered to represent nothing more than certificates of attendance." This has led to the conundrum of there being more university students annually in South Africa (1.4-million) than those undertaking purely technical training (400,000).

Hence the partnership as part of a long-term solution to this problem from an accounting point of view. Initiated by SAICA established as a separate entity, AAT(SA) offers a range of services, projects and qualifications to meet practical accounting needs within both the public and private sectors.

"What use is an accounting practitioner who gets half of the entries right?"

AAT was originally developed in the UK over 30 years ago as a competence-based, entry-level, business-led qualification where the chartered level organisations in that country came together to set definitive training standards for their staff. Piloted in 2007 and launched in October 2008, AAT(SA) takes the same standards and tailors them to the South African context. Unlike a graduate program, where theory is taught first and practice assessed second, for every unit of the AAT(SA) curriculum there are three categories: knowledge, context and performance criteria. The emphasis of assessment is on the doing, backed by the knowledge. As a result, the pass mark required for an AAT(SA) qualification is 100%. The learner must demonstrate their ability to perform each and every performance criteria. After all, what use is an accounting practitioner who gets half of the entries right?

In terms of AAT(SA)'s commitment to South Africa's development, Zimmelman points out, "AAT(SA) provides valuable support for three categories of the National Development Plan. The first is *Building a capable state* - professionalising competencies, and creating accounting and reporting capacity in our public sector institutions. The second is *Economy and employment* - because if you grow the financial strength of a country you grow the capacity for growth. And finally, *Education, training and innovation* - by capacitating and supporting accounting process and standards in the TVET colleges and also by teaching the AAT(SA) programmes in these institutions."