



**SCHOOL
LEAVER
OPPORTUNITIES**

**THIS IS
ACCOUNTANCY**



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INNOVATION

INTEGRITY

LEADERSHIP

COMMUNITY

The next generation of chartered accountants will empower business, government and society to tackle challenges and seize opportunities.

To enable a world of sustainable economies, we will need **leaders** who are capable of imagining a better future and have the courage to ensure that their vision becomes reality. We will need **innovators** who can harness new technology, making it work in the best interests of the **communities** it is designed to serve. And we will require professionals with expertise and **integrity** who can lead us into the future with responsibility, confidence and hope.

Becoming a chartered accountant is the gateway to a career spent creating positive change and shaping economies, communities and the world around you. In this guide, we will show you how to begin your journey, what it involves, and the many paths available to you.

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WHO ARE WE?

We are ICAEW, a world-leading professional membership body for chartered accountants.

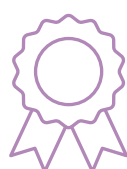
We provide qualifications and professional development to people around the world - sharing knowledge, insight and technical expertise, so talented students just like you can start their own businesses and develop rewarding careers in a range of organisations.

GET TO KNOW US BETTER:



ICAEW

stands for the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.



We were incorporated by a Royal Charter in

1880.



We support

172,273

members in 150 countries.*



38,199

students are currently taking our qualifications.*



Over

7,000

authorised employers around the world offer our qualification to their employees.

*ICAEW member data December 2024, includes parent companies.

Our ICAEW community take their professional qualification worldwide with over 210,000 students and members in 150 countries across the following continents:

North America

21

Europe

44

Asia

25

South America

12

Africa

28

Middle East

11

Oceania

9

YOUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

The title 'ICAEW Chartered Accountant' and the letters 'ACA' after your name mean that you have completed a minimum of three years in-depth training, passed a series of examinations and are committed to continuing professional development to keep your skills up to date. As a result, you will enjoy unrivalled career opportunities in a range of industries.

WHAT DO CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS DO?

Qualifying as an ICAEW Chartered Accountant opens up a huge number of potential career paths.

You could find yourself analysing a fashion brand's finances, advising charities on tax, or working on the board of a multinational consumer company.

THEY'RE TRUSTED TO:



ASSESS

From Premier League football clubs to huge multinational companies, chartered accountants look at how money flows in and out, measure the value of assets, and analyse how organisations are performing.



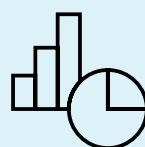
AUDIT

From charities to banks, fashion houses to NHS Trusts, auditors work across every sector to independently confirm the trustworthiness of financial figures. It's work that can take you all around the world.



ADVISE

Companies turn to chartered accountants when they want to launch a new product, buy another company or improve the way they operate. That's why many chartered accountants move into chief executive officer (CEO) roles and other senior leadership positions.



ANALYSE

Calculating the worth of a company's physical goods might seem relatively straightforward, but how do you measure the value of a brand, or measure the impact of climate change on the valuation of assets? That's where you come in.

WHY STUDY AN ICAEW QUALIFICATION?

WHAT IS CHARTERED?

Being chartered sets you apart from your peers. It demonstrates your dedication, ambition and willingness to learn, as well as showing you have industry skills and practical experience.



GET AHEAD

Professional qualifications make you stand out in a competitive job market and demonstrate your willingness to learn and develop.



BE VALUED

Employers and businesses value the high level of knowledge, skills and expertise that ICAEW Chartered Accountants bring to their organisations.



GO FAR

Go further in your career as the globally recognised ACA prepares you for leadership roles around the globe.



A VAST ARRAY OF QUALIFICATIONS

Start your journey to becoming chartered by completing the ICAEW Certificate in Finance, Accounting and Business (ICAEW CFAB) – a standalone qualification that covers the first six modules of the ACA.

OUR QUALIFICATIONS

ASSOCIATE CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT (ACA)

The ICAEW Associate Chartered Accountant (ACA) qualification is one of the most advanced learning and professional development programmes available. It is valued around the world in business, practice and the public sector. The knowledge and skills provided by the ACA mean that ICAEW Chartered Accountants are highly sought after professionals.

Learn more about the ACA qualification on [page 9](#) (head to [ACA explained](#)).

ICAEW CERTIFICATE IN FINANCE, ACCOUNTING AND BUSINESS (ICAEW CFAB)

ICAEW CFAB is a qualification that teaches essential knowledge in finance, accounting and business, and it is recognised by organisations worldwide. Made up of the first six modules of the ACA, ICAEW CFAB will teach you skills that will be useful throughout your working life, and the qualification can be the first step towards a career as an ICAEW Chartered Accountant.

ICAEW BUSINESS AND FINANCE PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION (ICAEW BFP)

ICAEW CFAB is also a stepping stone to the ICAEW Business and Finance Professional (BFP) designation. BFP provides you with professional status, recognises your achievements, and supports you with your development as you progress in your career. Demonstrating your ability to stay up to date in your profession, BFP is evidence of a strong understanding of ethics and a commitment to professional development.

Read more about ICAEW CFAB and BFP here: [icaew.com/ourqualifications](https://www.icaew.com/ourqualifications)



I'm passionate about the ACA because it opens so many doors.

Dale Pollitt

Co-owner and Director of
Ryans Chartered Accountants

I was entrepreneurial from a young age. I was the kid selling sweets and fizzy drinks in the school yard. I was always interested in making money, which is probably the reason I did Business Studies GCSE and went on to win the Business Studies Award at my high school.

I joined Ryans at the age of 21, switching from a different qualification to the ACA. Five years later, I was offered partnership, which was a big step in my career. My job involves day-to-day management of a diverse portfolio of clients, helping them to grow at scale and achieve their dreams.

I still have that entrepreneurial mindset. A client who was one of the pioneers of the food hall industry approached me and my business partner to become involved in a project. It was tough but very satisfying to see something come from a blank canvas, giving the local population a fantastic new hospitality venue.

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Find out more
about Dale's story
[icaew.com/dale](https://www.icaew.com/dale)

ACA EXPLAINED

There are three integrated elements to ACA training.



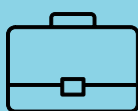
BUSINESS, FINANCE AND ACCOUNTANCY EXAMS

These exams will equip you with the professional skills you need to excel in the modern workplace.



SPECIALISED LEARNING

Tailor your learning, completing a minimum of 30 units of Specialised Learning from a wide range of interactive e-learning content.



PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Put what you learn into practice as you record at least 450 days of relevant 'on-the-job' work experience while developing key transferrable skills.

THE EXAMS

With a 'step-by-step' approach that supports you to succeed, the ACA equips you with in-depth knowledge across a range of topics in business, finance and accounting. You'll be assessed through 14 computer-based exams which can be taken at an exam centre or remotely, and are split across three levels:

- **Certificate Level:** Sustainability and Ethics; Accounting Fundamentals; Assurance and Risk Fundamentals; Business Law; Tax Fundamentals; Business Insight and Performance.
- **Professional Level:** Fundamental Case Study; Assurance, Risk and Reporting; Corporate Reporting, Data and Assurance; Business and Digital Strategy; Corporate Financial Strategy; Tax Compliance and Planning.
- **Advanced Level:** Technical Case Study; Strategic Case Study.

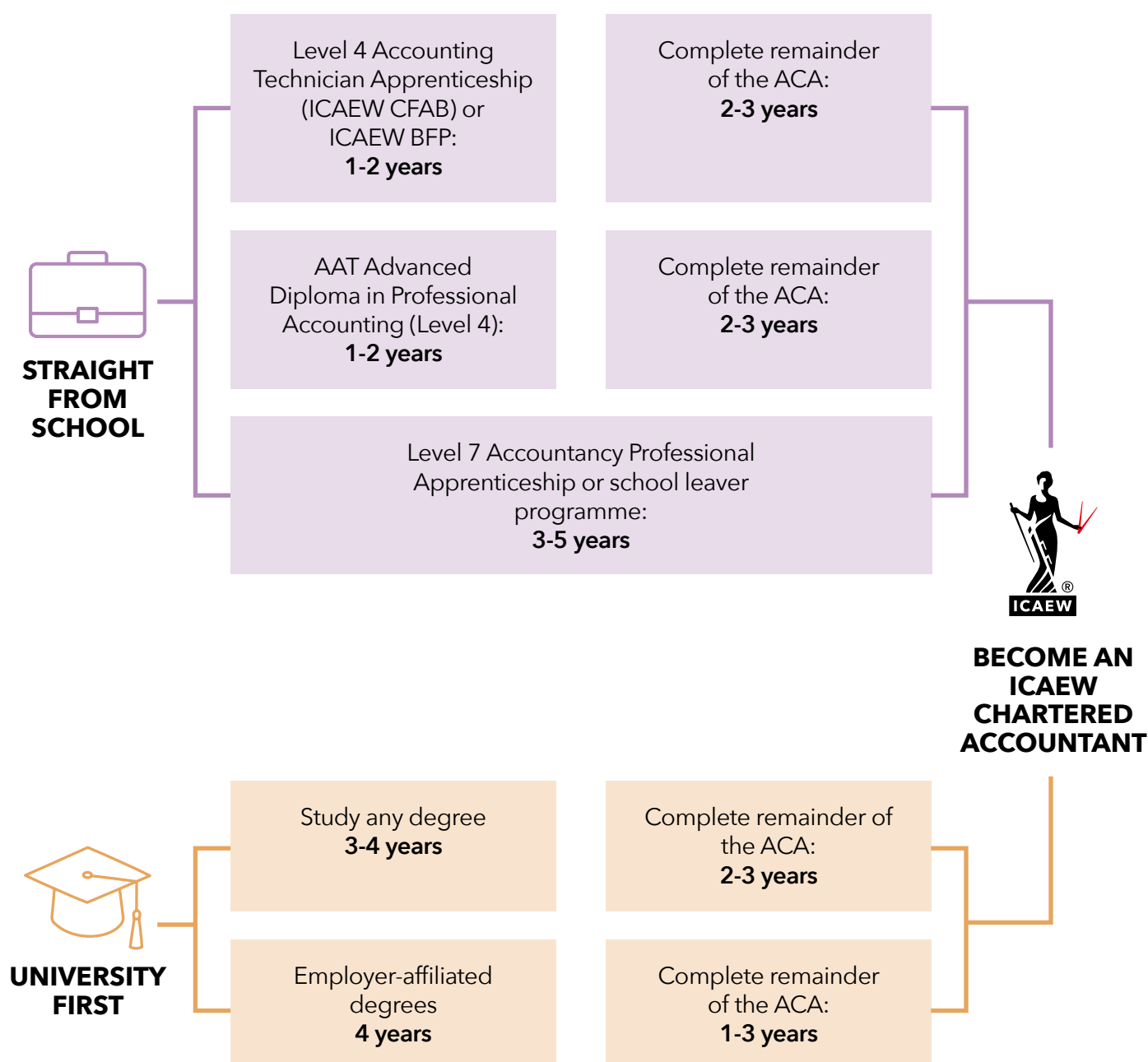
KEY THEMES: SUSTAINABILITY, TECHNOLOGY AND ETHICS

Over the next decade, sustainability, technology and ethics will be the three key themes impacting every accountant and business they serve. All three have been integrated throughout the ACA, guiding you to become a forward-thinking business leader ready for tomorrow's world.

Find out more about at
[icaew.com/discoveraca](https://www.icaew.com/discoveraca)

DEGREE OR NO DEGREE?

There are a variety of different routes to becoming an ICAEW Chartered Accountant. You can start your journey straight from school, while you're at university or after you have graduated.





As an internal auditor, I look at different areas of the business.

Evie Dolega-Ossowski
Internal Auditor, Marks & Spencer

When you tell someone you're an accountant or an auditor, they think you must be really good at maths. But that's not necessarily true. It's more about critical thinking and being able to analyse, interpret data, talk to people, build relationships, and challenge conventional wisdom.

As an internal auditor, I look at different areas of the business - from clothing to food, and from finance to supply chain. My job is to understand the processes involved and how we are managing risk factors associated with our many interconnected operations.

I studied the ACA under an apprenticeship programme, so I got to work and build up skills around things like communication and teamworking, while also studying the technical side of accounting. Even after you've completed your exams, there's always somebody to talk to if you need help.

[icaew.com/startyourcareer](https://www.icaew.com/startyourcareer)

Find out more
about Evie's story
[icaew.com/evie](https://www.icaew.com/evie)

STRAIGHT FROM SCHOOL - THINGS TO CONSIDER



CAREER GOALS

If you don't want to wait around, this is the best option to kick-start your career.



MONEY

Avoid the expense of university - your employer will pay your ACA fees for you.



SOCIAL LIFE

With ICAEW society events and employers' sports teams, there's always something fun to do.

OPTION 1

APPRENTICESHIP IN ACCOUNTANCY OR SCHOOL LEAVER PROGRAMMES

- Combine ACA training with on-the-job learning.
- You'll be considered an employee and paid a salary.
- You can start these options after completing your A levels.

OPTION 2

AAT-ACA Fast Track

- Start this option after completing your GCSEs.
- Study full time at college or with an employer.
- Study for the AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians) qualifications.
- Complete the Level 4 Diploma in Accounting, and progress onto the ACA upon completion.

UNIVERSITY FIRST - THINGS TO CONSIDER



TAKE YOUR PICK

Pursue any subject you feel passionate about, then find an ACA training agreement. For more training vacancies click [here](#).



CAREER GOALS

Experience life as a chartered accountant through insight days, internships and placements.



SOCIAL LIFE

Improve your employability by building new skills through societies or sports teams.

OPTION 1

STUDY ANY DEGREE - THEN STUDY THE ACA

Combine ACA training with on-the-job learning. You'll be based with an employer and paid a salary. You can start these options after completing your A levels.

OPTION 2

EMPLOYER-AFFILIATED DEGREES

Established by employers with certain universities, study for an accounting and finance degree while experiencing real work at the same time. Over a period of five to six years, you'll gain both a degree and the ACA qualification.

Need more options? Find out at [icaew.com/findyourroute](https://www.icaew.com/findyourroute)

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I see my career as a series of stepping stones, built on the foundation of the ACA.

Corinne Thompson
CEO and Founder of ECAP Financial

I studied geography at university but after I graduated I decided I wanted to work in finance. I initially started my training as an accountant at a big four accounting firm. There was a perception at the time that an accountant sits in a broom cupboard and crunches a bunch of numbers. It hasn't been like that for me. Accounting can open so many doors.

I've been in the technology space for 12 years, mainly holding financial director-type roles. Last year, I started my own business, working with founders who need my specialist skills and knowledge to help scale their business.

I see my career as a series of stepping stones, built on the foundation of the ACA. There's no limit to what you can achieve if you have the appetite.

icaew.com/startyourcareer

Find out more
about Corinne's story
icaew.com/corinne

THE BENEFITS TO YOUR CAREER



LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

The ACA prepares you for leadership right up to board level. That's why **84 of the FTSE 100 companies** have an ICAEW Chartered Accountant on their board.*



SUPPORT

ACA students have a high **first-time exam pass rate of 84%**, driven by quality learning, teaching and support.**



COMMUNITY

You'll be supported by our global network of **172,273 members*** and **38,199 students.*****



OPPORTUNITY

99 of the world's 100 global leading brands employ ICAEW Chartered Accountants.****

* ICAEW member data and FTSE 100 data at March 2025.

** ICAEW Case Study exam statistics 2023.

*** ICAEW member data and FTSE 100 data at March 2025.

**** ICAEW member data at February 2024, Interbrand Best Global Brands 2023.

All other figures are as at 31 December 2023

Find out more about our qualifications at
[icaew.com/whyicaew](https://www.icaew.com/whyicaew)

[icaew.com/startyourcareer](https://www.icaew.com/startyourcareer)

YOUR IMPACT AS AN ICAEW CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

Your ability to solve problems is needed in every part of the economy. So, you really can work in any industry that fascinates you.

Here are just a few of the things you can do with the qualification.



FOLLOW YOUR CURIOSITY

From helping to launch a groundbreaking piece of new technology to deciding whether to invest in a new start-up, your vision can delve into a vast range of exciting challenges.



CHANGE LIVES

Play a key part in helping charities raise and spend funds that can save lives and change the world - use your talent to support a cause you're passionate about.



REACH THE TOP

Pushing boundaries sets chartered accountants apart from the rest. It's no surprise that you'll find ICAEW Chartered Accountants as CEOs of multinational companies.



EXPLORE THE WORLD

Recognised as a premier business qualification in 150 countries, the ACA is your passport to take your career wherever you want to go.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU EARN?

Trainee and qualified chartered accountants can expect extremely competitive salaries.

£35k^{*}

is the average graduate starting salary for Accounting and Professional Services in the UK.

£55k^{}**

is the global average salary for a newly qualified ICAEW Chartered Accountant with up to two years of experience.

£107k^{}**

is the average global member salary across all sectors.

£132k^{}**

is the average global member salary for those working in business, but it's not the limit.

Apply for a training agreement at train.icaew.com

* High Fliers: The Graduate Market in 2023.

** Indicative based on mean averages of specified salary bands - Member profile response 2025.

NEXT STEPS

Now that you've explored the world of chartered accountancy and all the opportunities it has to offer, you're ready to take the next steps:

1

RESEARCH

Visit our [website](#) to find out more about our qualifications. Sign up to our newsletter to receive employability tips, job updates and information about careers in accountancy. You can also hear from our students and members and learn about the different routes open to you.

2

APPLY

Now you're ready to start looking for a career. Start your search early and get to know our Authorised Training Employers and their values.

Create a profile and apply for ACA training jobs at train.icaew.com

If you are looking to study the ACA independently, register as a student here:

my.icaew.com/studentregistration

3

KEEP IN TOUCH



[ICAEW Careers](#)



train.icaew.com



[@ICAEW_Careers](#)



[@icaew](#)



[Become an ICAEW Chartered Accountant](#)

Chartered accountants are talented, ethical and committed professionals. ICAEW represents more than 210,000 members and students around the world. 98 of the top 100 global brands employ ICAEW Chartered Accountants.*

Founded in 1880, ICAEW has a long history of serving the public interest and we continue to work with governments, regulators and business leaders globally. And, as a world-leading improvement regulator, we supervise and monitor more than 11,000 firms, holding them, and all ICAEW members and students, to the highest standards of professional competency and conduct.

We promote inclusivity, diversity and fairness and we give talented professionals the skills and values they need to build resilient businesses, economies and societies, while ensuring our planet's resources are managed sustainably.

ICAEW is working towards becoming net zero, demonstrating our commitment to tackle climate change and supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goal 13.

ICAEW is a founding member of Chartered Accountants Worldwide (CAW), a global family that connects over 1.8m chartered accountants and students in more than 190 countries. Together, we support, develop and promote the role of chartered accountants as trusted business leaders, difference makers and advisers.

We believe that chartered accountancy can be a force for positive change. By sharing our insight, expertise and understanding we can help to create sustainable economies and a better future for all.

[charteredaccountantsworldwide.com](https://www.charteredaccountantsworldwide.com)
[globalaccountingalliance.com](https://www.globalaccountingalliance.com)

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* includes parent companies. Source: ICAEW member data March 2025, Interbrand, Best Global Brands 2024