



DEPARTMENT OF WORK AND PENSIONS

EXTENDING TRAINING OPTIONS



Offering ACA training makes the DWP more attractive to potential recruits. Some people want to train with a specific accountancy institute, and will look at employers who offer that.

Alison Lally,
head of professional development for the finance and commercial community at The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

- Historically, DWP offered CIMA and CIPFA training
- 25% of its most senior finance managers are ACA qualified
- DWP recognised that some recruits want to train with a specific institute
- Offering ACA training makes DWP more attractive to recruits
- Extending training options to increase competitive advantage

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE

FINANCE AT HEART OF THE ORGANISATION

When asked what the sector is looking for and how they find what they need, **Allison Lally**, head of professional development for the finance and commercial community across the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) explains: 'More than ever finance needs to be at the heart of the organisation, to enable us to meet the fiscal consolidation challenge. A resourcing strategy for the profession across government has been developed, which integrates three main strands:

- to grow our talent from high potential existing civil servants and through graduate recruitment for the Financial Management Development Scheme;
- to invest in our existing professionals. We have a lot of potential within our existing community and we want to maximise the benefits we gain from this;
- to undertake a limited amount of recruitment at the part-qualified and qualified levels where the specific skills required are not already available in-house.'

OFFERING ACA TRAINING: DWPs DECISION PROCESS

The Financial Management Development Schemes have been established in 10 government departments. This includes Defra, the Ministry of Justice and DWP. As part of the scheme they offer graduates the opportunity to study towards a professional accounting qualification.

The DWP welcomed its third intake of ACA trainees into the scheme in September 2010. Until 2008, the department only supported CIPFA and CIMA accountancy training, despite the fact that 11% of the DWP's 400+ accountants are ICAEW members – as are 25% of its most senior finance managers. The decision to offer the ACA training as well followed a review of all the CCAB qualifications against the DWP's business requirements, including the support provided by the institutes to the organisation and its trainees.

ATTRACTIVE TO POTENTIAL RECRUITS

Since 2008, 15 out of 44 trainees have chosen the ACA, and in 2010, 50% of the annual intake did so. What influenced their choice? 'The ACA has prestige in the marketplace,' explains Lally. 'It has a strong reputation for technical knowledge and a strong brand.' She believes that offering ACA training makes the DWP more attractive to potential recruits. 'Some people want to train with a specific accountancy institute, and will look at employers who offer that,' she says.

BREADTH OF EXPERIENCE

Lally says of their resourcing strategy: 'A key development is that we are looking to increase breadth of experience, through career development moves around departments and into and out of other sectors.'

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Ali Ahmad

Ahmad joined the DWP in September 2008 and has recently successfully completed the whole of the ACA academic syllabus. He was keen to gain the ACA. 'The ACA training offered a balanced combination of academic and work experience, focusing on developing well-rounded professionals,' he says. He believes his ACA training will benefit himself, the DWP and the public. 'The ACA qualification stresses the need to maintain high standards of ethical and professional conduct,' he says. 'It is also providing me with hands-on experience in handling business processes and practices, revenue/ expenditure budget analyses and reviews, as well as performance management. I am gaining the required analytical skills and commercial awareness to ensure that I make quality decisions in a variety of roles.'

Ricky Thomas

Thomas, another Financial Management Development Scheme trainee from the 2008 intake, has also gained insights into lots of different areas of finance. 'The wide range of real work experience on offer with the scheme is one of the things I like most about working at DWP. In the last two years, I have undertaken four placements and expect one more before I qualify. I've worked with a range of managers on strategic and operational projects which gives you a diverse network and allows you to see the interactions between areas that you would otherwise not have'.

Recently, the maths graduate has been given the autonomy and responsibility working on several projects investigating productivity and efficiency and how these can be increased across the region and fed into the national picture. Ultimately, we need to demonstrate value from each pound of taxpayers' money spent by the department. The nice thing about these roles is that I'll be able to see how much money has been saved'