

# ACCOUNTANT

Average Annual Salary £42,500

## WHAT DO ACCOUNTANTS DO?

Accountants provide financial advice and they help businesses to manage their money and maximise profits. The job will involve preparing financial reports, checking the accuracy of financial documents, and advising on finances. Topics that an accountant might have to tackle include tax, pay, budgets, and procurement (the sourcing of goods or services).

The day-to-day role will vary depending on the type of accountancy you decide to specialise in. For example:

Public practice accountants support businesses to manage their finances. They tend to be employed in accountancy or professional services firms, and can enjoy the variety of working with a wide range of different clients.

Management accountants manage budgets within a business and look at how to make the organisation more profitable. They spend their time looking ahead, so forecasting and strategic business planning might be part of their day.

Public finance accountants work with public sector organisations, including local councils, the NHS and schools, and government departments like HM Treasury. Financial reporting is a key part of the role (providing information to stakeholders outside the organisation) and they have a responsibility to ensure that financial activities within the public sector are carried out efficiently and in the right way.

Public practice or public finance: what's the difference?

It would be easy to get these two muddled up. Public practice accountants work with a range of business clients to help them manage their money; they tend to work in accountancy firms. Public finance accountants work with the public sector to ensure public money is being spent appropriately.

## WHAT QUALIFICATIONS ARE REQUIRED TO BECOME AN ACCOUNTANT?

If you choose the academic route to accountancy, you'll need GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades 4/C or above, including **English and maths**. Achieving As and Bs at A level (or equivalent) and a 2:1 from your degree used to be a requirement for many top firms, but some have now moved away from these requirements in an effort to broaden recruitment. Firms are all still looking for the full package of experience, ability, skills and attitude.

When researching accountancy degrees, find out which will give you an exemption from certain professional exams. This means you can claim credit for prior learning, thereby accelerating your route to qualification and saving you from learning the same content again.

If you decide against a degree in accounting, **alternative degrees for would-be accountants include maths, economics, business, management and finance**. Remember that graduates of all subjects can pursue this career path.