

## Prize Winner – Kalina Forbes

We're always delighted to share the successes of our students, so this week we caught up with Kalina Forbes, Assistant at PKF Francis Clark, who was recently awarded 100% and the Little prize in her ICAEW Professional paper Business Planning: Taxation. So how did she do it?

### From Psychology to Accountancy

As many young people deciding which path to follow at university, Kalina was initially torn between studying Accountancy and Psychology.

“I was interested in going into Accountancy, but even if I had done a degree in it, I would still need to complete the chartered accountancy training at a firm. Instead I chose to study Psychology, which really interested me, and is still useful in my career.”

Alongside her degree, Kalina was able to keep working for an accountancy firm part-time to give her exposure to the industry, and during the summer holidays she'd work as a data matcher, learning more about data management on the job. This commitment to hard work, as well as learning, are two of the key ingredients to Kalina's successes to date.

### Early career

Upon achieving a first class degree in Psychology from Cardiff university (no mean feat in itself), Kalina took a job in the finance department of Wiltshire council to get more practical experience of working in finance. Then after applying for the graduate accountancy programme, she was offered a place at PKF Francis Clark to start the following September.

Within weeks of starting her new job, Kalina was already taking her first ACA exams, and that's when her journey with Reed Business School began. After two years, she's now completed all of her certificate and professional level papers, and looks forward to completing her advanced papers over the next year.

“I knew it was going to be three years of working while studying, but I was prepared for it, and organised my time to get the most benefit from my studying as I could.”

### Studying with RBS

Kalina started with her certificate papers in Law, Accountancy and Assurance. And while many might then choose to complete the remaining certificate papers before moving on to the professional level, at Reed Business School we do things a little differently, which we think makes the learning process more effective.

After Kalina's cohort had completed their certificate level papers in Accountancy and Assurance, they then moved straight on to studying for their corresponding professional level papers - Financial Accounting and Reporting, and Audit and Assurance. Kalina says “I like the way the course is structured, as it allows you to build on the information you have just learnt, rather than leaving it a year before revisiting that topic in more detail.”



## Time Management and Organisation

“Personally I like to start studying early, to save me stress further down the line.” This is one of Kalina’s main philosophies when it comes to her studying, and she likes to be very organised about it. Having completed the first part of each new module at our school, she’ll go home and make sure she properly understands it, before coming back for the second stint - that way, she can really focus on the new information. And the same goes for when she comes back for the revision course.

“I like to go to the revision week having already revised, so that I am prepared to attempt practice papers and ask questions. The earlier you start revising, the more time you have to digest the information.”

That being said, Kalina is very clear that this method of starting early is what works best for her – we’re very aware that many of you out there thrive under the pressure of a last minute cram. However, we always recommend giving yourself as much time as possible to make sure you fully understand the content of each paper.

## Biggest challenge

Kalina says that when starting a new module, the biggest challenge is dealing with the quantity of new information. “After the first phase of learning at Reed Business School, I personally have to go away and really work at it myself, and I have to be organised.”

Being a big believer in balance, Kalina’s process is to structure her own learning, giving herself goals and treats for achieving them. “If I have structure, then I can give myself time to go to the gym, or go out with friends once I’ve completed a certain amount of work. And keeping those things in your life is really important for managing your mental health and looking after yourself.”

Kalina believes you have to have self-discipline and determination in order to succeed. “At the end of the day you’re working towards something that’s going to help your own career. So you might as well do everything that you can now in order to get where you want to be.”

## The best bits about studying with Reed Business School

Kalina was full of praise for RBS and her journey with us so far. She admits that our tutors are excellent, singling out her tax tutor in particular. “She was always up to date with the latest changes, and is a real expert in her area. She was able to explain why certain rules exist, the history of the rules, and use case studies to make the learning more interesting.”

As well as our well-situated accommodation and overall organisation, Kalina also really values the fitness classes we now offer. “Having that designated time for exercise helps balance the week and reduce the stress. Plus the food is really good so you need the fitness classes!”

In addition, Kalina really values the network she’s established with her study cohort, in her case made up of some of her fellow PKF Francis Clark colleagues, as well as students from other firms of all sizes. “I usually study with the same group, so I’ve made great friends. The group you study with is a brilliant support network as you’re going through the same process together.”

In short, Kalina’s advice to succeed in your professional studies would be to organise yourself in a way that works for you, use your support network when you need to, and make sure you look after yourself!