President's page, July 2016

Welcomes

01 July 2016

Growing our membership

One of the questions I'm sure we are all asked from time to time is 'what made you become a tax adviser?' My story started when I was about 15 and thought that I'd like to become a solicitor. After studying law at King's College, London I was fortunate to have the opportunity to spend a year at Cambridge, where I encountered taxation for the first time. Many, though, will join our profession without having studied a relevant area first. Accounting firms large and small are used to taking new trainees with an eclectic mix of school, college or university studies. It's also become more common for trainee solicitors to study something other than law – although a conversion course is then needed.

Many of us could tell our stories at schools to help teenagers consider the range of possibilities open to them. There's a useful pack and slide presentation available on the CIOT website to support conversations around a career in tax. The pack highlights the variety of routes into the profession and the range of qualifications. There are also brochures available which can be handed out at an event, banners – and indeed a whole range of help to put on successful event. The link is under the Members section.

The way in which new entrants to taxation can obtain their qualifications has improved substantially over the past few years. The CIOT's joint programme with the ICAEW enables trainees to obtain both chartered accountant and chartered tax adviser qualifications is a streamlined manner. The CIOT and ICAEW worked together on joint recognition of each other's exams. This means that a joint programme candidate will start ICAEW studies, including basic taxation in the first year, and then replace the higher level ICAEW tax exam with a CTA exam. This was pioneered with 'Taxation of major corporates', principally aimed at those joining a larger firm, but has now expanded to include 'Owner-managed businesses' and 'Indirect tax'. After

passing that first exam and the other ICAEW exams, the candidate is awarded the chartered accountant qualification. One more CIOT exam later leads to the CTA. This approach offers reduced time out of the office and removes potential duplication of content – while maintaining the high standards needed for both qualifications.

I'm pleased that the CIOT and ATT have now worked together to produce the 'Tax Pathway'. Many firms ask their staff to start their tax careers with the ATT qualification, before moving to the more advanced level of the CTA. The new tax pathway streamlines this approach by mutual recognition of both bodies' exams. The biggest benefit that employers and students may find with the new Tax Pathway will be that they can choose which ATT papers to sit at the beginning of their study path because no papers are mandatory at that early stage. The ATT qualification is awarded once sufficient exams have been passed, before moving to the final CTA exams and a second qualification. This allows students the option to halt their studies at a mid-point with a qualification and membership of the ATT, while encouraging them to take the further step to the higher level CTA. This is complemented by flexible study options to suit everyone on the Tax Pathway, from classroom teaching to online distance learning. The Tax Pathway was launched in June; there is more detail at hub.tax.org.uk/pathway.

A different route to a CTA is the Fellowship route. This is open to anyone – whether or not they have a CTA through the exam route. CTA (Fellow) requires a dissertation on a taxation topic, or the submission of a body of work. It's a minimum of 10,000 words – so more than a whole year's worth of Presidential pages – but may well be suitable for a more experienced tax professional who would find it a more relevant route than the exams. There's also an interesting collaboration with Birmingham University, where those undertaking their research MSc in Taxation are awarded a CTA Fellowship as well as their degree. The Birmingham MSc is full or part-time and is supervised, which some may find beneficial as they develop thinking on a tax topic. Anyone contemplating Fellowship is encouraged to contact the CIOT's Education team for advice.

I am sure the Education team will continue to innovate to keep our qualifications relevant, high quality and open to a wide range of individuals, employers and their staff. One new option is the Human Capital Taxes exam (available from May 2017) aimed at those working in employee taxation. Looking at ensuring our qualifications are relevant for solicitors is an area I hope the team will be able to look at in coming years. One of the great strengths of the CIOT is the range of professionals it includes

among its members.