

ACCOUNTANCY
ACTION

THE ACCOUNTANCY ACTION SALARY GUIDE

How to pay, attract and retain the best people for
your business

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WHAT IS THIS GUIDE?

It's been a long time since we've produced a salary guide and there's a reason why.

From what I've seen, typically they are extremely generic and probably give more of a benefit to the recruiter (staying relevant) than they do to people like you who are trying to recruit (attracting the right person). Calling something a salary guide but sticking "Credit Manager - £35-70k" in there doesn't do anyone any good in my opinion.

On top of that, the employment market has changed from 20 years ago and the dynamic has shifted from an Employer holding all the cards to both parties being on more of an equal footing in a recruitment process.

Whenever I have a benchmarking conversation with a client, we typically end up talking about profiles.

What type of person do they want, what level of experience, for what salary? Where does that person want to be in the future, and what characteristics are they likely to hold?

Then two important questions;

How does your business attract those people?

And how do you retain them?

So we've created this guide, which is based on our 20+ years of experience in the Accounting & Finance market which will tell you three simple things:

1. What type of profile you get for your money
2. What you need to do or have to attract them
3. What you need to do to retain them

If you would like to explore the options further and have a wider conversation about what is right for your business then contact one of our Consultants and we will be happy to help.

TRANSACTIONAL & PART- QUALIFIED SECTION

The AAT “Apprentice” £23-28k + Study Package

What is their background?

- Somebody who has begun their AAT studies alongside either a placement or contract role OR someone who has been studying their AAT at college and is now venturing into the workplace.
- May have experience from their first placement of 6-24 months or at the lower end of the scale looking for their first role in Accounting.
- They will likely be looking to move on with their studies, but the important thing will be gaining valuable working experience, as an added bonus, they are likely to have a good understanding of their debits and credits and the fundamentals of bookkeeping.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- You’ll need to be willing to offer support for someone to go through the rest of their AAT qualification.
- A solid training scheme to allow them to develop their skillset as they accrue time in the role.
- This is a candidate you’re likely to get 2-3 years out of before they start looking to move onto the next level.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- To be able to offer them initial training and show them the ropes in the finance team.
- Develop them to give them some level of autonomy, and after they’ve completed their AAT they then may look to move onto either ACCA/CIMA so Study Support for these qualifications can’t hurt.

Doesn’t fit what you’re looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The Raw Grad or The Transactional Specialist

The Raw Grad

£25-28k + Study Package

What is their background?

- For those of you who are seeking a graduate but don't have the budget to attract someone from one of the UK's top Universities, this person is likely to hold a degree related to finance and looking to get their foot in the door within Accounting.
- May have experience from a placement year during their degree, or are likely to have dabbled with internships within Accounting Firms or similar organisations.
- Off the back of their degree, or maybe having taken some time out for traveling and life experiences, they'll now be ready and willing to start climbing the ladder in their career.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- You'll need to be willing to offer support for someone to go through either their ACCA, CIMA, or possibly ACA qualification.
- This would ideally be full funding as well as allowing study leave in addition to their holiday days to go and sit the exams.
- Have a sound business model with either a track record of growth or a game plan that will demonstrate that there is a tangible opportunity in the future.
- Other people within the business who they can aspire to follow in the path of, and who they can see will be able to mentor them in this early stage of their career.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- Take the time to train and develop them
- Be ready to offer them progression in terms of responsibility and salary within the first 12-18 months.

Doesn't fit what you're looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The AAT "Apprentice"

Red Brick Grad

£28-30k + Study Package

What is their background?

- Likely to hold either First Class or Upper Second Class Honours in a degree relevant to Accounting from a Red Brick, Russell Group, or sought-after University.
- May have experience from a placement year during their degree, or are likely to have dabbled with internships within Accounting Firms or similar organisations.
- Off the back of their degree, or maybe having taken some time out for traveling and life experiences, they'll now be ready and willing to start climbing the ladder in their career.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- You'll need to be willing to offer support for someone to go through either their ACCA, CIMA or possibly ACA qualification.
- This would ideally be full funding as well as allowing study leave in addition to their holiday days to go and sit the exams.
- Have a sound business model with either a track record of growth or a game plan that will demonstrate that there is a tangible opportunity in the future.
- Other people within the business who they can aspire to follow in the path, and who they can see will be able to mentor them in this early stage of their career.
- While specific sector preferences will be dependent on the particular person, we are seeing a lot of this generation coming through being very interested in Environmental or ethical sectors, Tech/Fintech, or disruptive Start-Ups.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- Take the time to train and develop them
- Be ready to offer them progression in terms of responsibility and salary within the first 12-18 months.

Doesn't fit what you're looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The AAT "Apprentice" or The Bookkeeper

The Transactional Specialist

£28-35k

What is their background?

- Have an Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, or Credit Controller role that you just need a good, solid person for? The transactional person could be the one.
- Likely to have gained years of experience in their specialism, these people are keen to stay within this type of role but may be moving for a slight salary increase, a change in company culture, or for unforeseen reasons such as redundancy.
- They probably won't be actively studying, maybe they started it one day but realised they didn't want to pursue it or maybe life just happened and got in the way.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- This person is all about work-life balance so some form of flexible working arrangement will be imperative and also an environment where they will feel respected and happy to stay for a long time.
- The work will need to be something that is able to be completed within the hours you've allocated (save for month/year end times).
- Salary goes a long way here, but also a track record of longevity within the business will be important to the person coming in.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- Genuine work-life balance
- A nice company culture and a working environment that makes you happy to come to work every day.

Doesn't fit what you're looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The Sh*t Hot Grad, The Progressive Assistant Accountant or The Stable Bookie

The Progressive Assistant Accountant

£32-35k + Study Package

What is their background?

- A few years into their career now, this person is likely to have picked up a specialism in either Accounts Payable or Accounts Receivable (or maybe both as an Accounts Assistant).
- They've likely begun to gain some month-end exposure, maybe accruals/prepayments or some VAT work.
- They will have now sat a few more exams in ACCA/CIMA or have potentially got near to qualification with AAT.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- This person is all about the month end, they've been handling either basic Accounts Payable or Receivable for a few years now and they're moving to get exposure to the next level.
- Study support will also be high on the agenda for either ACCA or CIMA, and an environment where they can really hone their month-end skills over the next 2 years or so.
- Have a sound business model with either a track record of growth or a game plan that will demonstrate that there is tangible opportunity in the future.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- Take the time to train and develop them
- Be ready to offer them progression in terms of responsibility and salary within the first 24 months.

Doesn't fit what you're looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The Transactional Specialist or The Stable Bookie

The Stable Bookie

£35-40k

What is their background?

- A seasoned professional with years of experience working at transactional finance levels and taking accounts to trial balance.
- Potentially a family person or someone who just likes to come in, do a job, and not take any work home from them... but they're usually very good at what they do.
- They are likely to have the ability to work autonomously and will be someone who will be looking to be in this role years into the future.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- This person is all about work-life balance so some form of flexible working arrangement will be imperative and also an environment where they will feel respected and happy to stay for a long time.
- The work will need to be something that can be completed within the hours you've allocated (save for month/year-end times).
- Salary goes a long way here, but also a track record of longevity within the business will be important to the person coming in.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- Genuine work-life balance
- A nice company culture and a working environment that makes you happy to come to work every day.

Doesn't fit what you're looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The Part-Qual or The Progressive Assistant Accountant

The Part Qual £35-45k + Study Package

What is their background?

- Now we're into fully-fledged Accountant roles, whether that be Management or Financial, and likely to have a year or two of experience producing sets of accounts.
- Mid to late way through their studies it's somebody who will progress within the next 2 years or so to become fully qualified.
- Likely to have once been The Raw Grad at the start of their career, they're now probably 5 or so years through their career.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- You'll need to be willing to offer support for someone to finish off their CIMA, ACCA or ACA qualification and it would be really helpful to have someone within the business who can sign off their experience in order to get full qualification.
- Have a sound business model with either a track record of growth or a game plan that will demonstrate that there is tangible opportunity in the future.
- Other people within the business who they can aspire to follow in the path of, or potential peers who are in the same position so that they can navigate their way through to qualification together.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- Be ready to offer them progression in terms of responsibility and salary within the first 18-24 months once they've finished their qualifications.

Doesn't fit what you're looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The Stable Bookie

The Company Accountant

£40-50k

What is their background?

- A seasoned professional with years of experience working at transactional finance levels as well as doing management and financial accounting, who is adept at running the accounts function of an SME (likely financial turnover of sub £10m) without plans to significantly grow.
- Potentially a family person or someone who just likes to come in, do a job, and not take any work home from them... but they're usually very good at what they do.
- They are likely to have the ability to work autonomously and will be someone who will be looking to be in this role years into the future.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- This person is all about work-life balance so some form of flexible working arrangement will be imperative and also an environment where they will feel respected and happy to stay for a long time.
- The work will need to be something that can be completed within the hours you've allocated (save for month/year-end times).
- Salary goes a long way here, but also a track record of longevity within the business will be important to the person coming in.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- Genuine work-life balance
- A nice company culture and a working environment that makes you happy to come to work every day.
- A good working relationship with the MD or CEO of the company.

Doesn't fit what you're looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The Finalist

The Finalist

£40-50k + Study Package

What is their background?

- These are “proper” Accountants now, either Financial or Management, and they’re within a year of becoming fully qualified with either ACCA or CIMA.
- Likely to have once been The Raw Grad at the start of their career, then the Part Qual, they’re now probably 6 or so years through their career and looking for a role that will offer them that uplift when they become Newly Qualified.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- Study support may not be a necessity now that they’re so close to the end of the exams, but a plan of developing them once they get fully qualified is an absolute must or you lose them in 6 months.
- Have a sound business model with either a track record of growth or a game plan that will demonstrate that there is tangible opportunity in the future.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- Be ready to offer them progression in terms of responsibility once they become a Qualified Accountant.
- Salary for a good Newly Qualified nowadays is around £48-50k, so you’re going to need to up the salary at some point or risk losing them.

Doesn’t fit what you’re looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The Company Accountant

QUALIFIED & SENIOR SECTION

The Newly Qual £50k-55k

What is their background?

- The former Finalist has now reached their qualification either ACCA or CIMA and has gained experience in Management and Financial Accounting, and in some cases both.
- They will have come up through the industry and understand things from the ground up, or maybe an SME firm where they've done Accounting for small businesses rather than purely Audit.
- Likely to have been working in finance for the better half of a decade now.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- For them it's now going to be a step up, they've worked in their Part Qualified Accounting role and are now seeking that change to potentially a Finance Manager vacancy or maybe a diversion into a more commercially focussed FP&A role.
- Have a sound business model with either a track record of growth or a game plan that will demonstrate that there is tangible opportunity in the future.
- It's imperative that this person has a mentor, ideally that person will be internal but failing that there should be a Qualified Accountant externally that they can seek advice and guidance from.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- They'll want to have advanced further in the next 2 years of their career, you're dealing with some of the most ambitious people in the market here.
- Businesses who are going through growth and/or fundraising offer excellent opportunities for this type of person.
- At some point in the future, thinking about equity options will be a good idea to get the best people tied into your business.

Doesn't fit what you're looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The "Straight From" OR The QBE

The “Straight From” £55-60k

What is their background?

- You’re looking at someone here who finished their University degree and then went straight into a Public Practice, typically Big 4 or maybe a Top 10-20 firm.
- They’ll have gone through a training contract with ACA and most of the time will have done a fully-fledged Audit role, although sometimes will have done a mix between Audit & Accounts.
- Likely to be 3 or maybe 4 years into their career, they’re now looking at that first move into industry.
- They won’t know the ins and outs of how things work in industry, but what you’re hiring for here is caliber and potential... they’ll have a strong academic background, have been to a good University, and will have received excellent technical training in their firm.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- Have a sound business model with either a track record of growth or a game plan that will demonstrate that there is tangible opportunity in the future.
- It’s imperative that this person has a mentor, ideally that person will be internal but failing that there should be a Qualified Accountant externally so that they can seek advice and guidance.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- They’ll want to advance further in the next 2 years of their career, you’re dealing with some of the most ambitious people in the market here.
- Businesses who are going through growth and/or fundraising offer excellent opportunities for this type of person.
- At some point in the future, thinking about equity options will be a good idea to get the best people tied into your business.

Doesn’t fit what you’re looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in this salary range: The QBE or The Newly Qual

The QBE (Qualified by Experience)

£5m-£10m turnover: £55k-65k

£10m-£20m turnover: £65k-70k

What is their background?

- A seasoned professional with years of experience working at transactional finance levels as well as doing management and financial accounting, who is adept at running the accounts function of an SME without plans to significantly grow.
- Potentially has the ability or experience to also run the Operations function within a business.
- Likely to have started by stopping studying, or have just advanced their career in an SME without the need to get their Qualification.
- They are likely to have the ability to work autonomously and will be someone who will be looking to be in this role years into the future.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- Providing autonomy in a Financial Controller or Finance “Director” role and also an environment where they will feel respected and happy to stay for a long time.
- The work will need to be something that can be completed within the hours you’ve allocated (save for month/year-end times).
- Salary goes a long way here, but also a track record of longevity within the business will be important to the person coming in.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- A nice company culture and a working environment that makes you happy to come to work every day.
- A good working relationship with the MD or CEO of the company.
- Somewhere they can feel at home for a number of years.

Doesn't fit what you're looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in the £50k-60k salary range: The Newly Qual or The “Straight From”
- Check out other profiles in the £60k-75k salary range: The PQE

The Post Qual

1-2 Years PQE: £60k-70k

3-4 Years PQE: £70k-80k

5 Years+ PQE: £85k +

What is their background?

- The “Straight From” has now gained experience within industry and is moving up through the ranks.
- At 1-2 years PQE this person will be responsible for the day to day running of the accounts or analytical function, leaving the Finance Director or CFO to focus on strategy you’re getting your Finance Manager, Accountant or Analyst who will be responsible for producing accounts within a business area and potentially running a small team.
- At 3-4 years PQE you’re now moving into Financial Controller territory where and commercial business decisions.
- At 5+ years PQE this person will be moving toward that #1 role, and will have some exposure to those strategic and commercial business decisions that had previously been left to the Finance Director or CFO.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- Have a sound business model with either a track record of growth or a game plan that will demonstrate that there is tangible opportunity in the future.
- This person must have a mentor, ideally that person will be internal but failing that there should be a Qualified Accountant externally that whom they can seek advice and guidance from.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- They’ll want to have advanced further in the next 2 years of their career, you’re dealing with some of the most ambitious people in the market here.
- Businesses who are going through growth and/or fundraising offer excellent opportunities for this type of person.
- At some point in the future, thinking about equity options will be a good idea to get the best people tied into your business.

Doesn’t fit what you’re looking for or can offer?

- Check out other profiles in the £55k-60k salary range: The QBE or The Newly Qual
- Check out other profiles in the £60k-70k salary range: The QBE
- Check out other profiles in the £70-80k salary range: The QBE or The Seasoned #1

The High-Flying Financial Controller

£70k+

What is their background?

- This will be a fully qualified Accountant who is technically very strong and will have had experience of managing teams and leading the day to day of a finance department.
- They will have had experience of producing Year End accounts and managed transaction processes.
- Likely to have a number of years of post-qualified experience and looking for that role or business where they can go to the next level in the future.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- A clear and ideally proven roadmap to a Finance Director role where they can be the number 1 person in the finance function.
- Exciting and valuable projects for them to lead or have involvement in. This will be around systems development, improvements to reporting or to processes to.
- At this level, they are unlikely to want to get too bogged down in the day to day so will need strong teams beneath them for support.
- Will want to be involved in more commercial aspects of the business, and exposed to the more commercial people too – not just within finance.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- A documented succession plan with clear timelines and areas for development.
- A strong pipeline of relevant projects as well as involvement in commercial decisions or meetings.
- Relevant pay increases and/or bonuses as they achieve certain objectives on their way to becoming the Finance Director.

The Group Financial Controller

£75k+

What is their background?

- Having come from a Group background you can expect this person to have Consolidation expertise, they are also likely to be an expert in IFRS, GAAP or SOX.
- Tip top from a technical stand point as well as holding the qualifications that go with it (usually ACA or ACCA) and able to manage monthly accounts as well as Year End too.
- They will have people management skills, but are likely to have managed a small, dedicated reporting team.

What is needed to attract this candidate?

- If somebody is looking to move into this sort of position, they are likely to view it as a stepping stone to either a Divisional Finance Director or Chief Financial Officer role.
- They are likely to want to opportunity to manage Qualified Financial and/or Management Accountants rather than a transactional team.
- As well as exposure to the strategy of the business, they will also be looking to get involved in Tax and Treasury aspects of the work as well as Group Reporting.

What is needed to retain this candidate?

- A documented plan on how to become either Divisional Finance Director or Chief Financial Officer, along with timelines and objectives to complete.
- An opportunity to assist in board presentations, even if it's just the preparation at the early stage with a view to more exposure down the line.
- Get them involved in various projects with the business to keep them engaged and keep their work fresh.

So, there we have it.

Hopefully this was a more comprehensive and a lot more helpful than the usual salary guide that you might receive.

The goal of this guide is to get you asking questions internally.

Questioning whether you're targeting the right sort of candidate, whether you've got the tools to attract them and whether you can retain them in the business.

Being able to answer these questions should improve your recruitment and retention significantly.

As always, it's not an exact science but is a benchmark based on our knowledge in the market.

If these profiles don't quite fit what you're looking for, or if you feel like you need to discuss it further with one of our Consultants then please get in touch.

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