

## About Mehran Iqbal

Mehran is a Director at Smart Leap & Smart Probate

Mehran holds dual memberships with ACCA and ICAEW, and he completed ATT in January 2020 and CTA in May 2024.

Mehran serves on the Council of the Association of Taxation Technicians, contributes to its Technical Steering Group (TSG), and sits on the ICAEW Conduct Committee.

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## CTA



## Interview

**Tell us about your current role, career so far and how did you first start working in tax?**

I began my accountancy career in 2007 within a local practice. While qualifying, it became clear to me that supporting clients effectively required more than standard compliance, it demanded a deeper understanding of the UK's complex tax landscape. It was at this stage, following the encouragement of an acquaintance, that I decided to pursue tax as a specialism.

I currently hold dual memberships with ACCA and ICAEW, and I am qualified as both an ATT and a Chartered Tax Adviser (CTA). By completing my ICAEW probate examinations, I now also provide a comprehensive, end-to-end approach to Inheritance Tax planning and estate administration. I founded my practices last year, something I had not initially anticipated, but which has enabled me to redefine the support I offer to clients.

As a sole practitioner, I provide a personalised, partnered service that I believe is essential when managing complex tax matters. Whether advising individuals, owner-managed businesses, property investors or film production companies, my objective is to combine technical depth with clear, pragmatic advice. Holding Chartered, CTA and ATT status provides a strong foundation for leading my practice with confidence, ensuring clients receive specialist tax advice directly from the person they trust.

Beyond my practice, I am deeply committed to advancing the standards of our profession. I serve on the Council of the Association of Taxation Technicians, contribute to its Technical Steering Group (TSG), and sit on the ICAEW Conduct Committee. These roles place me at the forefront of developments in tax policy and professional ethics, ensuring the advice I provide is not only technically rigorous but consistently aligned with the highest regulatory standards.

**What made you decide to study for the CTA?**

Choosing the CTA was a natural decision. Since high-school, I have been guided by the principles of Kanban - the Japanese discipline of structured, efficient workflow, and Itqan - the Arabic concept of striving for excellence and mastery in one's craft. I recognised early on that delivering the highest standard of tax advice meant pursuing the profession's most rigorous qualification.

That commitment was tested during my first CTA exam sitting. I remember standing in the exam hall watching rows of students arrive with suitcases filled with the latest tax legislation. At the time, I simply could not afford the books, so I walked in without that safety net.

It was a humbling but defining moment. It forced me to become sharper, more disciplined and more reliant on a deep understanding of the legislation. I did not just want the letters after my name, I wanted genuine mastery of the subject. That discipline remains the cornerstone of my practice today. I am committed to providing the technical precision my clients' affairs demand, whether navigating complex investigations or advising on specialist tax matters.

### How did you find life as a CTA student?

Balancing full-time work with any level of study is never easy. After passing my ATT exams, I promised my son I was finished with studying only to begin the CTA six months later.

The commitment was immense. Balancing a young family alongside caring for my mother meant time became my most valuable resource. My path to qualifying was paved with late nights and lost weekends, often spent locked away in the spare bedroom. I still vividly remember sitting in the Tesco car park, feverishly reviewing exam notes while my wife did the shopping.

I even stepped away from playing cricket, the only sport I have always loved. I am sure many batsmen in the league were relieved to see me hang up my boots for a season or two! The journey was as much emotional as it was technical, and the relief of passing my final exam was overwhelming. That level of sacrifice was the price of developing the specialist expertise I now provide to clients. It was demanding, but absolutely worthwhile.

### What benefits does your CTA qualification bring to your employer?

The CTA qualification represents the highest level of specialist tax qualification in the UK, providing technical depth that extends far beyond general accountancy.

The CTA qualification has helped me develop a sharp and intuitive command of tax legislation, equipping me to manage complex HMRC investigations and advise on intricate tax matters with clarity, precision and confidence. For clients, this means more than simple compliance. It means having an adviser who combines technical expertise with practical strategy to protect both business interests and family wealth, giving them total peace of mind.

### How has achieving the CTA helped your career and provided you with opportunities?

Achieving the CTA has been a pivotal milestone. Beyond the technical expertise, it has strengthened my professional confidence and reinforced the trust clients place in me as a tax specialist. It has opened the door to more complex advisory work and enabled me to deliver significantly greater value. Ultimately, it played a key role in giving me the confidence to establish my own practice.

### Which modules did you enjoy the most and what were the most relevant to your current role?

I valued the CTA qualification because it forced me to think like a tax specialist. The AT Individuals and AT Owner-Managed Businesses modules were the most relevant to my day-to-day work, reflecting many real client scenarios.

For other areas such as VAT, SDLT and IHT, the APS exam provided an excellent framework for delivering integrated advice. Having already completed the ATT and spent over a decade in the field, the CTA was the definitive step transforming years of practical experience into high-level advisory capability.

### What kept you motivated throughout the qualification?

My motivation was the transition from a practitioner to a tax specialist. I saw the CTA not simply as an exam, but as a way to formalise years of experience into a recognised and valuable skillset. It also provided career security. After nearly 20 years in employment, the qualification gave me both the market credibility and personal confidence to evaluate my next step whether continuing to progress as an employee or establishing my own practice.

### Would you recommend this qualification to others?

I cannot recommend the CTA qualification highly enough. The journey is demanding, but the impact is transformative. It is a true differentiator in a competitive profession. For those with a foundation such as the ATT, the CTA moves you from processing information to delivering strategic, high-level advice. It is challenging, but the professional standing it provides makes every hour of study and every sacrifice worthwhile.

### Any words of wisdom to future candidates thinking of studying the CTA?

Clarity of purpose is essential; you need to know exactly what you are heading towards when the pressure builds. True resilience is not just a trait it is forged in the moments that test us most. When challenges arise, have faith in your abilities and keep your focus firmly on the finish line. The journey is demanding, but the clarity gained and the confidence built through overcoming those obstacles are exactly what set a professional apart.

