

Profile

Tristan is Director and Group Head of Tax at B-FLEXION, a private entrepreneurial investment firm. B-FLEXION has offices across Europe and in the United States, Tristan is based in London.

Tristan has completed ATT, CTA and ADIT and was the first to complete the DITT qualification in February 2023.

Qualifications

CTA member

ADIT Affiliate

DITT holder

TRISTAN NOYES



Interview

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

My first job was at KPMG Bristol as a school leaver in the Private Client Tax team, completing trust tax returns and accounts. Initially this was a gap year before starting university, but I enjoyed working in tax and stayed on. After a year they put me through my ATT exams, a year later I started CTA and in May 2000 I passed the CTA exams. I was at KPMG for over 10 years. I then worked for a High Net Worth individual setting up his private family office for 18 months before moving to my current organisation B-FLEXION, an international investment firm, where I have worked for 13 years. I recently undertook and completed the CIOT's ADIT qualification.

What area of tax do you work in and how did the Tax Technology qualification help you in your day-to-day job?

I had recently completed the ADIT qualification and saw the DITT advert and thought it sounded like an interesting subject. B-FLEXION is currently undertaking a financial transformation project, to help increase efficiencies and incorporate technology better in our finance team, and I wanted to make sure the Tax Team got the most out of that project. We have been hiring IT consultants and technical people and I thought studying the DITT would help me to speak more knowledgeably with colleagues whilst working on this project. The syllabus was very pertinent to what I was doing in the firm at that time.

What motivated you to undertake this qualification?

The DITT was launched at the right time for me when I was looking to learn more about this area. I liked the syllabus, and the modular nature of the programme allowed me to study when I was on holiday, on the train during the commute to and from work. I found it useful to fit in my learning around my job and my life. ADIT was more of an investment of my time (it is a higher-level qualification), but the way DITT was structured meant it was easy to consume the information.

What are your observations on the syllabus, learning experience, assessment questions and touchpoint comms?

I liked the modular structure, the fact that it was all online, some of the syllabus was quite straightforward some of it was more challenging. I found the tax technical parts (such as Making Tax Digital module) clear and the technology parts (Blockchain, Change Management and Project Management etc) more challenging. I hadn't studied these before and this gave me a good introduction. There was a broad range of information covered in the assessments which met my expectations in terms of introducing tax technology and the ability to speak more knowledgeably about this subject without trying to make me into an expert.

What stood out in terms of learning and skills you have developed as a result of studying the DITT?

The use of APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) and RPA (Robotic Process Automation) stood out as something I could use in a practical way in my job. Also, OCR (Optical Character Recognition) was something I knew about but wasn't aware of all the ways it could be used. AI and Machine Learning I found interesting, but I don't know how I would apply those technologies in my current role.

How did you manage studying and working at the same time?

I could manage this due to the flexible nature of the course, I could study wherever, whenever. I studied on the train, in bed, whilst relaxing on the beach on holiday. It didn't feel like a burden on my time because of the micro learning format. I could cover two or three sections in an hour, some of it would be on the laptop, or I could watch the videos on my mobile or tablet.

Do you have any guidance on how best to approach the learning material?

You have to study the modules chronologically. The learning is a mixture of videos and written reports, so you can schedule time (such as during the commute home from work) to look at these. It's about being organised with your time. There is a question bank for practice questions, a mock assessment and then the real thing, which are all taken online. I found I was able to complete them comfortably in the time allowed, and you receive instant feedback with your score from the assessment, which is really satisfying and slightly addictive to keep going!

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

I enjoyed Project Management and Change Management modules as these were very relevant to my current role and I could apply them. I hadn't done any specific study in these areas before. Also having a deeper dive into Blockchain helped me to understand this subject better.

How do you think this programme will benefit the profession?

Technology is coming. MTD is already in place, so anyone working in tax must get on board with it, get in front of it, or else you will be dragged behind. Technology allows us to work more efficiently and in a more organised way. It makes tax calculations safer, more secure. Studying the Diploma in Tax Technology course helps tax professionals embrace technology and see where it can be incorporated into their existing or new processes. Also, the Diploma encourages us to pursue further learning in this area.

Would you recommend this programme to others?

Yes I would recommend the programme to others. You can study relatively leisurely; it doesn't feel like a massive investment of time. The learning material is digestible, manageable. I feel I got a lot out of it for the amount of investment I put in. The cost isn't prohibitive and all of the learning resources (Learning Dashboard/Assessment Centre) are all found in the one place online.

What kept you motivated throughout the programme?

The immediateness of receiving a score from the module assessments kept me motivated. You do some work, take the assessment, and feel like you have achieved something. As I was using the information on the course in my day job at work it was really useful when having conversations with the tech team members. It is pertinent to the work I am doing right now.

Any words of wisdom to future candidates thinking of studying the DITT?

Don't rush it. Be committed to working through it but you don't need to kill yourself to get it all done quickly. Try to read the modules, think about them and try and apply them at work, be hands on with it.

