

Accountancy is a profession accessible to all



Sinéad Donovan, the new President of Accounting Technicians Ireland, shares her plans for the next 12 months and looks to the past to her strong links to ATI.

New President of Accounting Technicians Ireland (ATI), Sinéad Donovan, says she will work to promote ATI's school-leaver route into the chartered accountancy profession and to strengthen the already strong links between Accounting Technicians Ireland and Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI).

The relationship between Accounting Technicians Ireland and Chartered Accountants Ireland is of vital importance to Ms Donovan "We have a unique relationship with CAI and it is time to harness the power of both organisations and make sure that we leverage from them in the best way possible."

Accessibility to the accountancy profession is a fundamental value of the new President. That everyone, regardless of their background or financial status, has a route to become an accounting technician or a chartered accountant is important to her. Inclusiveness will be an underpinning theme to her year leading ATI.

Sinéad has the strong aim to ensure that Accounting Technicians Ireland is the preferred route into chartered accountancy for school-leavers. The qualification as an accounting technician can be obtained after two years. The fully-funded accounting technician apprenticeship programme helps to make the profession accessible to all. It takes a further three years to train as a Chartered Accountant, should graduates decide to continue their studies.

It was as a school-leaver that Sinéad decided to enter the accountancy profession. Sinéad has worked with Grant Thornton since 2002, and was admitted to the partnership in 2005. She is currently a partner in the Financial Accounting and Advisory Services, working with multi-national clients.

Sinéad looked to her family background when choosing her future profession as a chartered accountant, and followed in the footsteps of her father, Cecil Donovan, who served as President of Chartered Accountants Ireland in 1986-87.

Sinéad discusses the personal importance of Accounting Technicians Ireland to her:

"I have such a strong personal connection with ATI. It is in my blood. My father, Cecil Donovan, worked hand in hand with Ben Lynch back in 1982 to establish ATI. Dad was a member of Council and incoming Vice-President of CAI in 1982, and together with Ben, who was Director of Education in CAI, they put into action the desire to have a sister institute that made the profession of Accountancy more accessible to all. Accounting Technicians Ireland was born in 1983, through the collaboration of CAI and the Irish Institute of Accounting Technicians."

Sinéad says "Speaking with Dad in the past, I know he ranks Accounting Technicians Ireland as one of his proudest achievements. With this background, it is natural I decided to go into the accountancy profession."

A core strand of accessibility is the Accounting Technicians Ireland's apprenticeship programme. Apprentices work within organisations four days per week, and study one day per week. They are mentored by an accountant or accounting technician for the two years of their apprenticeship in the core areas of study, and employers can either recruit from a pool of high-calibre talent or select existing employees to upskill.

Accounting Technicians Ireland has four highly active District Societies which run regular educational and social events to make sure that Accounting Technicians keep up to date with their profession and each other. During her year as President, Sinéad will visit each

of the District Societies as part of the 'Meet the President' series around the island.

Members of ATI are required to engage in continuous professional development annually. In order to best support members, ATI's CPD is free of charge and other training opportunities are heavily subsidised.

Sport is an integral part of Sinéad's life. A regular ironman participant, Sinéad hopes to promote the theme of well-being to the ATI members. "I am a firm believer in physical fitness for mental fitness and will use this year to ensure that mental wellbeing is kept front and centre in all we do."



Accounting Technicians Ireland has 10,000 members and students. Students can opt to study full-time at locations island-wide, part-time either at the ATI Academy in Chartered Accountants House on Pearse Street in Dublin or at partner college locations island-wide, online or via the Accounting Technicians Apprenticeship.

Sinéad is also pivotal to the development of Accounting Technician Ireland's Strategy 2024, a route map into the future of the profession and the Institute, whilst remaining true to the original core mission of ATI: making the accountancy profession accessible to all. She says "We are currently over half way through Strategy 2020 and whilst we will continue to monitor the achievement of that strategy, it is time to review and reinvigorate our strategy for the next four years."

Alongside the development of ATI's Strategy 2024, the new President will engage in a programmatic review of ATI's syllabus, and engage with partners and key parties: "it is critical that we know what our students and members want, and also what key stakeholders such as colleges, employers, clients and other peers in the profession want from us now and in the future."

Firmly recognising the roots of Accounting Technicians Ireland and the personal importance of those foundations to Sinéad and her family, ATI is looking towards the future. Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence and future developments impacting the accountancy profession are all very much on ATI's radar. The annual conference on 2nd December 2019 will address these developments in terms of the profession.

From Sinéad's familial roots in ATI to encouraging growth and development of the Institute and the profession, she is excited to take her dad's baton and lead into the future.