

Half workload: A new path to CTA success

By [Mark Tipping](#), issued by [Milpark Education](#)

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If you had told me at the beginning of bridging, that this journey would end, I would have agreed - every journey eventually ends. If you had told me that it would end successfully, I probably would have disagreed because I didn't have confidence in myself to believe in myself. If you had told me that it would have ended so successfully, I probably would have laughed at you - because that seemed like a crazy thought, especially since I had closed this chapter over ten years ago when I failed my first attempt.



Advanced Accounting (bridging programme to PGDA/CTA)

Who would have thought that, in the middle of the Covid-19 lockdown, scrolling on Facebook, while waiting for my fiancé, Nadine, to get back from Zambia after doing a medical repatriation flight, I would stumble across the advert for the half workload programme and I would think, "Is this doable?" I reached out to Gareth Olivier, the acting head of the school and he replied almost immediately, suggesting that I do the bridging programme, followed by the half workload PGDA (postgraduate diploma in accounting).

Registration was done, and I was ready for the journey that lay ahead – if I didn't act quickly, I would have chickened out. Bridging went by in the blink of an eye, and I was fortunate to have gotten through, in a decent position, feeling ready to tackle the beast of PGDA for the last time.

If it weren't for the incredible support of the team in the Milpark School of Professional Accounting (incorporating CA Connect), and Nadine spending late nights up with me – making sure I was fed before she went to work night shift, and listening to me when I moaned about wanting to quit through bridging – it probably would have been a different story.

Postgraduate diploma in accounting (PGDA/CTA)

Year one of PGDA began relatively stress free. I was now in the bridging routine of spending evenings and weekends in the books, missing out on functions and events – because the end prize was going to be worth it. But, as expected on such a long journey, things became complex. The support I once knew and became reliant on, completely fell apart and I landed up feeling lost, alone and ready to drop off – because you can't fail if you don't finish, and not finishing sounds better than

failing.

While supporting me and motivating me to keep on pushing and achieving, Nadine was fighting her own silent battle largely due to the painful impact that Covid-19 had on the healthcare sector. She didn't want to bring me into her battle because she felt I had enough to deal with and she didn't want to add extra stress, so she tried to fight it on her own. Nadine faced personal struggles that resulted in her needing emergency medical treatment in a long-stay healthcare facility.

I obviously blamed myself for everything that she had gone through, as I was always so busy studying that I forgot to look out for her. From that day, until just before Test 3, I didn't touch a book and I used that time to support her and to try deal with what was going on in my life, on my own, as best I could. When Nadine eventually came home, we had an honest discussion on how we were going to move forward.

I also confessed to her that I had fallen way behind. Nadine knew as well as I did, that I would not go back if I did drop off. She suggested that I rather reach out to the Milpark team for guidance and advice, reminding me that I needed to be honest about where I am and what I am going through before anyone could help me.

I delayed reaching out to the Milpark team because I was embarrassed and concerned about how I would be judged. However, JD (Jonathan Dillon, subject head: management accounting and finance) listened and gave me support and guidance on ways for me to get back on track and keep moving forward. And after many valuable consultations, when I finally felt like I was back on track on my academic journey, I was admitted to hospital for a short stay.

Fortunately, I was able to pass both my modules because I received even more support from JD, and progressed to year two. This was the confidence boost that I so desperately needed. Thankfully, year two went off with any major life hiccups; I stuck to my routine.

10 things I learnt on my three-year bridging and PGDA journey

1. The programme was designed by a team that knows what they are doing. By following the programme path, I managed to reach the end of the programme instead of getting lost along the way, which is what happened when I had created my own path in 2013.
2. The Milpark CA Connect team treats everyone as a valued member of their team, and not a number, no matter how big the class gets.
3. The Milpark CA Connect team will go out of their way to accommodate their students, whether it be before or after office hours. They will make a plan to help.
4. The Milpark CA Connect team enjoys seeing their students succeed. They are available to support them during the bad times and celebrate them during the good times.
5. The Milpark CA Connect team has made the CA(SA) qualification a more realistic opportunity for people who are no longer in a position to study full time or commit 40 hours a week because of personal and work commitments.
6. The Milpark CA Connect team has made the study opportunity financially manageable for more people – not many places would let you pay them off over 24 months, interest free.
7. It is important to take care of your physical health. Exercise regularly, eat a balanced diet and get enough sleep. Make sure to drink plenty of water and take regular breaks from work.
8. It is important to take care of your mental health. Life goes on while you are doing your PGDA, so it is important to take a day off here and there to spend time with your loved ones.
9. Students need support from those around them, but they shouldn't forget that those around them need support from them too.
10. Make full use of consults and the non-academic support available to students to help you achieve points numbered 7, 8 and 9.

Thank you to you and your whole team for walking this long journey with me. I am even more grateful that I was successful. Nadine cried when I told her I passed, and to see the smiles on my parents' faces when I told them was definitely worth it.

I am forever indebted to the Milpark/CA Connect team. Without you, I would not be able to say I have a PGDA/CTA, and I would certainly not be able to (hopefully) call myself a CA(SA). I will advocate for this programme to everyone, because this programme works. I and the rest of the class are proof that this programme works!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Tipping is PGDA Top Performer and Milpark Education Alumnus.

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