

## Work-Based Skills Questions and Answers

This document contains questions posed by employers and answers from the Profession.

### Implementation

1. Is there a formal structure required by the Institute or is it left to individual employers?

*Answer: The Profession is laying down a framework and principles to be observed. It is hoped that each company can adapt this to fit in with their own systems. We see it as a principles based system not a rules based system.*

2. Will the Profession set standards?

*Answer: The Profession has not laid down standards and is talking about skills rather than competencies which suggest standards. This will be kept under review but the main aim is to encourage students to reflect, to discuss and to plan their development as a first step in life-long learning.*

3. How will we know if the student has successfully completed the learning log?

*Answer: Sample learning logs will be provided with completion of several periods and we hope through the quality assurance process to spread good practice.*

4. Does the supervisor have to be trained? How do supervisors get the training required?

*Answer: The Profession will provide a supervisor's manual which we hope will address many of the points that a supervisor will need to be aware of. We believe that many companies will want to have their own in-house meetings to discuss the implications of the work-based skills requirement. If there is sufficient demand the Profession will offer another workshop in this area.*

5. Who is best placed to be the Supervisor? Who gives the final sign off? Can this be a different person from the day-to-day supervisor?

*Answer: The Supervisor can be anyone who has appropriate contact with the student and is probably the person who is also responsible for carrying out the firm's own internal appraisals. Where the Supervisor is not a Fellow of an actuarial association recognized by the International Actuarial Association then the final sign-off must be by a Fellow.*

6. How will the employer decide who makes a good supervisor?

*Answer: We will provide feedback through the quality assurance process. However, we know that some people will enjoy this task more than others so there is bound to be variability just as there is variability in operating appraisal systems.*

7. Can this be mapped onto employers' existing appraisal schemes?

*Answer: Yes the Profession hopes that it can be used in conjunction with existing appraisal and competency schemes.*

8. What happens if companies do not have a regular appraisal system?

*Answer: The work-based skills system should work without a tie in to the appraisal system if this is appropriate.*

9. Will there be flexibility over timing of appraisals/ review discussions?

*Answer: Yes we are suggesting periodic reviews at six month intervals but say that this could be at twelve month intervals if this is more suitable.*

10. Can employers be accredited?

*Answer: We would like to work with employers as the system starts and are asking to review the learning logs at twelve month intervals for the transition period but after that we believe that for several employers we will only need to see the logs on completion.*

11. How can non-traditional employers be involved?

*Answer: We hope that non-traditional employers will help the student in this aspect of their actuarial training. Where there is no actuary in the firm then the staff at Napier House will help find a Fellow who can give the final sign-off working in conjunction with someone in the firm.*

12. Will small companies be able to give sufficient breadth of experience? Will it be a burden to small companies?

*Answer: We ask that attention is paid to each of the key dimensions many of which are generic and apply to many jobs at this sort of level. The technical actuarial skills dimension is only one dimension and it does not matter if experience is limited. We hope that the system will not be a significant burden to any company*

13. What happens if some aspects of a dimension are not covered?

*Answer: The skills statements under each dimension are indicative rather than essential. Some skills cover more than one dimension. Employers may wish to adapt the skills statements to their situation. In particular under management it is assumed that all students will have addressed personal management skills but may not have had the opportunity for people management skills.*

14. How many attempts at each dimension are allowed?

*Answer: The only requirements are that each dimension must be addressed at least once and the process for development is unlikely to be less than one year for Associates and three years for Fellows.*

15. Will there be one point of contact between the employer and the Profession?

*Answer: The Profession is primarily a member based organization so our contact is primarily with individuals in this case students. However the quality assurance that we are planning for this task is on supervisors rather than students so it is helpful for us to know who we are talking to from the employer side. If the company would prefer there to be only one contact point then we can arrange to work this way.*

*The preference will depend certainly on the individual employer. One suggestion made was that for the quality assurance someone from Napier House came to the employer to look at the logs for all students and we would certainly be willing to look at this where it is feasible.*

16. Can sample logs be sent for review before the process starts for guidance?

*Answer: We would certainly be prepared to review these whenever an employer requests it within reason.*

17. How about students who do part of their training overseas?

*Answer: These students will be expected to maintain their logs while they are overseas but care may be needed about the supervision for this period. If there are any doubts please discuss this with Napier House.*

18. What happens to students who move?

*Answer: There is a cover sheet within the learning log which records the skills addressed and when. It is suggested that when a student changes companies that they should send the log to the Profession with the supporting evidence to date so that the progress to date can be recorded. The new supervisor will know what has been addressed and can then plan further development. The final supervisor is signing off that there has been a programme of work-based skills development. The supervisor does not have to sign off about the standards reached as these are a matter for a particular company and any failure to meet the company's standards should be dealt with as an appraisal/performance issue.*

**19.** Could confidentiality of material be an issue?

*Answer: It has been agreed that responses on half the review questions need not be attached when sending it in to the Profession if there are confidentiality issues. It is also hoped that the arrangements for students moving employers, whereby material can be lodged with the Profession at the part way stage when a student changes employers, will be helpful.*

**20.** What happens for students not in a commercial environment?

*Answer: The dimensions which must be addressed are reasonably generic and it is likely that someone not in a commercial environment but in other employment should be able to get experience across the range of the dimensions. It has been envisaged that anyone employed at a university but not studying for a degree either undergraduate or postgraduate would be able to complete the learning log.*

**21.** Can someone complete in less than three years? Can a university student with lots of exemptions have gained the work-based skills at university?

*Answer: We do not envisage that students studying for degrees will be able to gain appropriate experience for the learning log other than in periods of paid vacation employment or employment as part of a degree course e.g. a sandwich course. If someone joins the profession with considerable employment history then it may be possible after discussion with Napier House to allow some of this prior experience to be counted.*

**22.** Can existing students move onto this regime?

*Answer: Yes this is possible. We do not need to know whether this happens or not and we will accept a learning log submission or the existing forms for Institute students when the student is at the qualification stage.*

**23.** Can the employer add to the list of review questions? Can suggestions be sent to the profession?

*Answer: Yes please to both questions and we would like to add them to our list.*

**24.** Who decides which questions should be addressed?

*Answer: This will be the supervisor in discussion with the student for each review.*

**25.** Should the student be given any study time for this process?

*Answer: In discussions with employers it was felt that this will probably not form part of the study time but part of their work time.*

**26.** How long should a student spend on each review question?

*Answer: This will vary from student to student but it is not necessary to submit a completed well crafted essay for each question and bullet points will be sufficient. 500 words or about 10 relevant bullet points should also suffice. It is imagined that with two review questions on a six month basis it may not take much longer than 1–2 hours for the student to prepare for the meeting with the supervisor.*

**27.** How many external courses will a student have to go on?

*Answer: The Profession is asking students to undertake the Business Awareness course but beyond this course attendance is at the discretion of the employer. In-house events will of course be acceptable for students in training.*

**28.** Will there be an appeals process?

*Answer: An appeals process is being developed and will be put on the website when approved by the Profession.*

**29.** Can a student fail the work-based skills process?

*Answer: This process should sit alongside a company's appraisal process and if a student is not developing satisfactorily then the employer will need to communicate this to the student. The quality assurance process of the Profession will initially be on the employer/supervisor. However, if a poorly completed learning log is submitted to the profession more details may be sought from the student.*

**30.** Will there be a standard template?

*Answer: The learning log will be available on the Website in electronic form. It is also planned to make this record part of the WAM for individuals but we are not there yet. Employers can use their own forms but if the record is paper based then we ask that all material is securely kept together.*

**31.** Is this approach consistent with other professions?

*Answer: We believe that the work-based skills element is an important part of the assessment process for trainee actuaries. Our approach is consistent for our qualification with approaches used by the solicitors and accountants in UK.*

**32.** Could the learning log be used as evidence in a future disciplinary process?

*Answer: This will depend on the nature of the disciplinary investigation.*

**33.** Will overseas experience count?

*Answer: Yes. Students based outside the UK are also required to have a learning log.*

**34.** What happens if a log is not completed?

*Answer: The student cannot be considered to have gained the qualifications of AIA/AFA or FIA/FFA without the evidence of the learning log.*