



## Americas – Global Student Consultative Forum

Tuesday 22 June 2021 – 15:00 -16:00 (UK Time)

Blue Jeans Conference Call

**Attending:** Matt Tennant (MT) – Quality Manager  
Caroline Taylor-Steele (CTS) – Senior Quality Executive  
Brian Blake (BB) – Lead Student Representative  
Andrea Noronha (AN) – Student Representative  
David Zhong (DZ) – Student Representative

**Apologies:**

Item	Discussion Points	Actions
1	<b>Welcome</b> MT welcomed everyone to the meeting and brief introductions were carried out. David Zhong joined his first meeting as a newly appointed Student Representative.	NA
2	<b>Notes &amp; Actions from Previous Meeting</b> Notes from the last meeting held on 07 December 2020 were agreed as accurate.  An update was provided for the following actions from the last meeting.  <b>Action 1: CTS to contact the Communications Team to check the progress of LinkedIn group for the Americas Region</b> CTS confirmed that the Americas LinkedIn group has now been setup and a link to the group was recently included in an email communication sent to all students in the region. AN and DZ requested for the link to be resent.	

Item	Discussion Points	Actions
	<p><b>CTS to resend link to Americas LinkedIn group to students in the Americas region.</b></p> <p>It was agreed that the Lead Student Representative of the forum would be responsible for maintaining the LinkedIn group and that ownership would be passed to the new Lead Representative at the start of their term.</p> <p><b>Action 2: AB to ensure link to download the ZIP extractor is added to the test platform.</b></p> <p>Instructions were included in the new student handbook regarding the need for students to have access to a ZIP file extractor for their examinations. It was decided that the IFoA would not provide a link to a specific ZIP file extractor software as students may experience issues with compatibility as they are using different operating systems.. The joining instructions, which are released two weeks before the examination, will state whether a ZIP file extractor is required in order to prepare students.</p> <p><b>Action 3: MT to look into the reasons CP2 material is not provided before the exam and provide a formal response.</b></p> <p>The CP2 Exam team are aware of the current and previous feedback from the CP2 candidates in relation to time pressures of the exam. The format of the exam has not changed since the original exam was launched and there were no format changes when during the change to all online exams MT noted that the Learning Change Programme update later in agenda may address some of this feedback in the future.</p> <p><b>Action 4: AB to provide the website link to the Professional Skills Training information.</b></p> <p>The link to the Professional Skills Training information on the IFoA website was included in the notes of the December meeting.</p>	<p><b>CTS</b></p>
3	<p><b>Students Comments</b></p>	
	<p><b>Exam Booking &amp; Pre Exam Experience</b></p> <p>There were no major concerns with exam bookings for this session.</p> <p>AN commented that there was a lot of reading material in advance of the exam on how to access the platform, if this could be made more concise then this would be helpful. From the previous SCF and GSCF meetings, feedback was received that information provided was spread out over a number of webpages and guides. It was discussed that leading up to the April 2021 session, the updated Exam Handbook was created which pulled together all information into one central document to provide students with the essential information about sitting exams. AN commented that this was definitely an improvement on the previous session. MT advised there will be updates made ahead of the September exams.</p> <p>BB advised that there was some feedback received around the confusion about what materials could be used during an open book exam. MT acknowledged that the communication regarding plagiarism was close to the examination and apologised for any concern this may have caused. The IFoA wanted to ensure that all students received the same level of guidance on what is and isn't acceptable ahead of sitting their examinations. This guidance will form part of the student handbook going forward so will be accessible in one place.</p> <p>The student handbook can be found on the IFoA website here: <a href="https://www.actuaries.org.uk/studying/student-and-exam-news/student-handbook">https://www.actuaries.org.uk/studying/student-and-exam-news/student-handbook</a></p>	

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	<p>It was confirmed that the exams in September 2021 will be online. Exam dates for 2022 have now been published and these will also remain online.</p>	
	<p><b>Online Exams Platform</b></p> <p>Based on feedback from the previous and current session, the IFoA are working towards the following developments in order to improve the students experience. The IFoA is hoping to have these developments ready for the September session which include::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preview of uploaded exam submission before submitting</li> <li>• Rejection of incorrect file formats</li> </ul> <p>It is hoped these developments will be in place for the September exam session and the IFoA will inform candidates over the summer of if they will be live for the exam session.</p>	
	<p><b>Other Exam Related</b> (Access Arrangements, Results etc)</p> <p>AN mentioned that the primary concern of students in the region was the timing of the exams. AN queried if exams were to remain online whether the times could be adapted. MT highlighted a number of factors to why the exam are in UK times; customer service support needed during the exam and security of the exams being the major factor. AN queried if there was a plan in place to review this.</p> <p><b>MT to report back to the forum what options available for the 2021 exams in the different time zones.</b></p> <p><b>LCP Program and Consultation</b></p> <p>MT advised that the Learning Change Programme has recently been announced to the student population and recommended that member read about the details of the program online. One of the projects strands is considering the delivery of the online exams in the future. In the short term this does not solve the issue discussed in the meeting, however the project looks to address the needs of our global membership.</p> <p>MT advised that the IFoA is currently seeking some Student representatives from the Global forums to join a focus group as part of the Learning Change Programme in order to gather feedback on students views of the curriculum up to the Associate level. MT commented that this would be a good opportunity to feedback any comments regarding the CP2 exam.</p> <p><b>Action CTS to send over the Learning Change Project information to the forum.</b></p> <p>Link provided below:  <a href="https://www.actuaries.org.uk/about-us/reinventing-profession/learning-change-programme">https://www.actuaries.org.uk/about-us/reinventing-profession/learning-change-programme</a></p>	<p>MT</p> <p>CTS</p>

Item	Discussion Points	Actions
	<p><b>April 2021 Exam Questions</b></p> <p>AN highlighted that students had raised concerns that typing calculations particularly in the early subjects (CM &amp; CS papers) was challenging and time consuming.</p> <p>It was discussed that SP exam papers have seen some changes since they were sat in the exam centres. Feedback was received that the questions in some of the SP papers have become more generic and application based and not as closely linked to the syllabus as they had been previously. MT advised that now the exams are online and in Open Book format, candidates may see a shift in the style of the question types from definition to application based</p> <p>BB queried if this shift would be accompanied by a re-evaluation of the allocated time as answers will now need to be more considered. MT advised that the papers going forward were written specifically for candidates doing online exams therefore time allocation should have been taken into consideration when the exam papers are written.</p> <p>SP5 &amp; SA7 feedback received suggested that the material didn't line up with the Core Reading therefore BB queried if there had been any issues with the investment subjects. MT advised that he didn't know at this stage until the Examiners Report has been published.</p> <p><b>CTS to investigate if there have been any issues with content of SP5 &amp; SA7 exam papers once the Examiner Report have been published.</b></p>	<p><b>CTS</b></p>
	<p><b>Tuition</b></p> <p>ActEd have confirmed that they do offer reduced rates for students on low incomes. Students are asked to contact them directly if they need to discuss their personal circumstances.</p> <p>DZ advised that ActEd's overseas delivery times for study materials needs to be improved as he had experienced significant delays when ordering earlier in the year.</p> <p><b>MT to pass on feedback to ActEd regarding delays to overseas deliveries of study materials.</b></p>	<p><b>MT</b></p>
	<p><b>Work Experience Requirements</b></p> <p>DZ experienced some issues with submitting a work experience application for the Associate designation. DZ advised that the new online system to submit work experience applications was a big improvement however in his case there was an issue with the Member Services team receiving the application despite being sent an automated confirmation. MT apologised to DZ for the technical issue experienced and advised that the IFoA was getting a new database which we hope will improve the work experience application process further for students. It is hoped improvements to the user experience should be seen within the next 12-18 months.</p> <p>AN queried if PPD records were reviewed on an annual basis to check the quality of the submission. MT advised that all applications are reviewed at the end of the process and the Quality Team also carries out monthly audits to ensure the set standard is being achieved.</p>	

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	MT advised that as from January 2022 work based skills, Form A and Form B will no longer count as part of a student's work experience recording. All work experience applications must consist of PPD only.	
	<b>Students Communications</b> A question was raised in relation to students who are undertaking the CAA designation and whether they will need to decide whether they wish to join the IFoA or the Society of Actuaries (SOA) once they are CAA certified. What communication will be received depending on which organisation they join. MT they will only receive the communications from the IFoA if they decide to become a CAA certified member of the IFoA.	
	<b>Other</b>  AN asked if the Mutual Recognition agreements will be continuing in the future. MT advised that the mutual recognition agreements, with the exception of the AAE MRA (Actuarial Association of Europe), are currently under review and for the time being have been suspended.  The IFOA has now introduced another route to becoming a Fellow or Associate member which is known as Individual Qualification Recognition.  <b>CTS to share website link to information on Individual Qualification Recognition.</b>  Link provided below: <a href="https://www.actuaries.org.uk/membership/mutual-recognition">https://www.actuaries.org.uk/membership/mutual-recognition</a>	
4	<b>April 21 Exam Survey Headliner Report</b> The April 21 Exam Survey Headliner report was noted by the forum.	
5	<b>SCF Mid-Year Update March 2021</b> The SCF Mid-Year Update March 2021 paper was noted by the forum.	
6	<b>Any Other Business</b> <b>SCF &amp; GSCF Review</b> Over the summer a review is due to be carried out of the SCF and GSCF forums. This was due to be carried out last year however the decision was made to delay this due to the impact of COVID and the importance of stability. The review will determine the effectiveness of the forums and how they should look going forward. Members of the forum should expect to receive some communication regarding this over the summer requesting feedback.  <b>Students in Bermuda</b> Students in Bermuda consistently experience adverse weather conditions when sitting exams during the September session which severely impact exam performance. BB asked if there was anything which could be done to help with this. MT advised that if students felt that their exam performance had been impacted then they should submit a Mitigating Circumstances application following their exam sitting.  Link provided below:	

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	<a href="https://www.actuaries.org.uk/studying/after-exams/mitigating-circumstances">https://www.actuaries.org.uk/studying/after-exams/mitigating-circumstances</a> MT and CTS thanked members for their attendance and contribution and the meeting was closed.	
5	<b>Proposed date of next meeting</b> - November 2021	



## Global Student Consultative Forum Feedback Return Form April 2021 Exam Session

<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Exam Booking and Pre-Exam Correspondence:</b> <i>To cover feedback and comments relating to the process of booking exams, including COVID-19 related communication and guidance.</i>
<b>Student Feedback</b>	
<b>Theme 1 – Exam Booking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Smooth process of booking exams. Clear communication on instructions was provided before the exams</li></ul>	
<b>Theme 1 Exam Booking – IFoA Response:</b> <i>We thank students for their feedback in this area. We are glad to hear students had a positive experience when booking exams ahead of the session.</i>	

  

<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Online Exams Platform:</b> <i>For Online Platforms, this should cover technical questions e.g. equipment/software/download/upload etc.</i>
<b>Student Feedback</b>	
No feedback/comments received.	

  

<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Other – Exam Related:</b> <i>Access Arrangements, Mitigating Circumstances, Results, etc.</i>
<b>Student Feedback</b>	
No feedback/comments received.	



Topic:	April 2021 Exam Questions: <i>To cover feedback and comments relating to exam questions.</i>
Student Feedback	
<b>Theme 1 Typing &amp; Timings</b> CS & CM Exams <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Typing out math equations on word was considered inconvenient to some students Example: CM2A</li></ul>	
<b>Theme 1 Typing &amp; Timings – IFoA Response:</b> <i>We have a keystrokes guide to assist candidates when preparing for mathematical questions and the examiners have adapted exam questions to suit the online environment, for example by sometimes including formulae in the questions rather than requiring candidates to write them in their answers. Exam papers are tested under timed conditions during the review stage, to assess whether the question can be completed in time. If, during the marking process, it's felt that candidates are generally experiencing undue time pressure, the examiners will take this into consideration when grading papers.</i>	
CB Exams No feedback/comments received.	
CP Exams No feedback/comments received.	
SP Exams <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SP 7 and SP 8 were only partially linked to the syllabus and difficulty level was hard. Major changes observed in exam question type from offline to online exams.</li></ul>	
<b>Theme 2 – Syllabus Coverage &amp; Question Type - IFoA Response:</b> <i>All IFoA exam papers go through various levels of review, with areas of assessment looking at how they align with the syllabus in terms of content and assessment methods and also the difficulty of the paper. Any areas of concern identified in the exam paper will be highlighted within the subject Examiners report.</i>  <i>The Examiners have taken into account the new online format when setting papers, whilst ensuring that the overall assessment by topic area and skill type remain aligned to the subject syllabus.</i>	





*In relation to the difficulty of the SP7 & SP8 papers compared to previous sittings, the Examiners look for evidence of difficulty during the marking process. If there is evidence that a paper is more challenging than anticipated this will be considered and the subject pass mark adjusted accordingly if appropriate.*

SA Exams

No feedback/comments received.

CB3

No feedback/comments received.

**Topic:**

**Tuition:**

*To cover feedback and comments relating to ActEd.*

**Student Feedback**

Theme 1- Materials

- Prompt and timely arrival of materials

**Theme 1- Materials – IFoA Response:**

*We thank students for their feedback in this area, we will ensure your comments are shared with ActEd.*

**Topic:**

**Work Experience Requirements:**

*To cover feedback and comments relating to Personal and Professional Development and/or Work-Based Skills, and Form A/B.*

**Student Feedback**

No feedback/comments received.



<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Student Communications:</b> <i>To cover newsletters, webpages etc.</i>
<b>Student Feedback</b>	
No feedback/comments received.	

<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Other:</b> <i>To cover feedback and comments relating to any other aspects of the IFoA student experience.</i>
<b>Student Feedback</b>	
<b>Theme 1 – Exam Timings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Exam timings brought up as a major concern for students writing in North America. Having to take exams at 3 or 4 AM EST is impacting performance. Students recommended to consider a more convenient timing and some mentioned even prefer 6 or 7 AM EST.</li></ul>	
<b>Theme 1 – Exam Timings</b> <i>This topic was discussed during the Americas forum meeting, please refer to the meeting notes.</i>	