



Institute
and Faculty
of Actuaries

Post-Exam Feedback High-Level Report

April 2021 Exam Sitting

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The post-exam survey was distributed to all 11,876 IFoA exam takers from the April 2021 session. A total of 4427 candidates provided feedback on their experience, which represents a 37% response rate.
- 1.2. Overall satisfaction for the April 2021 exams was **6.9/10**, which remains equal to the September 2020 examinations.
- 1.3. Satisfaction with the IFoA communication around the exams remained positive. The IFoA continues to reduce the disparity of reported satisfaction of UK & Ireland candidates compared with international candidates. It is welcome to see increases in reported satisfaction in candidates being aware of the arrangements and information leading up to the exam session.
- 1.4. Based on feedback from the April and September exams, information on the website relating to examinations was consolidated; a new exam handbook launched alongside direct email communication on examination guidance leading up to the April session. It is welcome to see this new communication was well received. It should be noted that the IFoA correspondence on exam plagiarism referencing and citation was the lowest scoring area, with a particular disparity to note between UK & Ireland candidates compared with the global candidates.
- 1.5. There has been a continued drop in the number of candidates reporting completion of their exam paper. **29.8%** of candidates reported completing the whole paper, compared with 32.3% of candidates from September 2020 and 55.5% of candidates in the April 2020 exams.
- 1.6. Candidate's reports very high satisfaction with the online exam platform for the April 2021 session. With some small increases, this remains in line with the satisfaction scores reported for the September 2020 session.
- 1.7. Regarding **Paper Difficulty**, candidates reported SA4, CS2A, SP5 being the most challenging papers this exam session. There was an average increase in the reported difficulty of 7.7% compared with the September session. The most significant reported increases in difficulty were SA4, CM2B and CB2. The most significant decreases in difficulty were SP9, CP2 and CM1B.
- 1.8. In regards to **Time allocation**, SP6, CS2A, SP4 were reported as the toughest to complete in the allocated time. There was an average increase of 5.1% of candidates reporting being short of time compared to September 2020. The most significant reported increases in the subjects CS1B, SP5 and SA4.
- 1.9. Regarding the exam paper relevance to the subject **syllabus**, candidates report broadly the exam papers being linked to syllabus content. It should be noted, however, candidates reported the SA4, SA1, SP5 and CS2A papers as having less than 65% relevance to the syllabus. This will need to be explored further with the examiners of those subjects.
- 1.10. A high number of written comments were received about the CSA exam, the guide on plagiarism and reference, and time constraints of sitting the exams, in general, were the highest recurring comments concerning frustrations of the exam sitting. Regarding suggestions for improvement for future sessions, increased time for online exams and allowing a handwritten element was the high recurring comments.

2. Exam Booking Experience (Very Satisfied & Satisfied)

Question	UK & Ireland	Global Areas	All	% Change April 21 vs September 2020
Experience of booking onto the exams online	97.5%	95.4%	96.1%	+1.6%
Customer service experience booking onto exams via phone	95.2%	95.2%	95.2%	-0.1%
Email correspondence after booking	95.4%	97.1%	96.6%	+0.9%
Experience of contacting Education Services	7.6/10	7.9/10	7.8/10	+1%

3. Covid-19 Communication (Very Satisfied & Satisfied)

Question	UK & Ireland	Global Areas	All	% Change April 21 vs September 2020
I understood the arrangements for the April 2021 exams	90.6%	95.6%	94%	+1.2%
The IFoA kept me informed of developments	84.2%	93.3%	90.3%	+1.7%
The information presented on the website was clear and understandable	76.4%	90.6%	85.9%	+5.3%
The joining instructions emailed to candidates contained the information I needed in advance of the exams.	96.5%	98.1%	97.6%	+6.4%
The new 'Exam Handbook' was useful to my exam preparation	79.6%	89.2%	86%	N/A
The April 2021 Exam Guidance emailed to candidates contained the information I needed in advance of the exams.	85.7%	93.5%	90.9	N/A
The guidance of plagiarism, referencing and citation was easy to understand	60.2%	82%	74.4%	N/A

4. Online Exam Platform (Very Satisfied & Satisfied)

Question	UK & Ireland	Global Areas	All	% Change April 21 vs September 2020
I was able to test the online platform successfully before my exam	99.2%	99.1%	99.2%	+0.3%
The Two Factor Authentication process was easy to use	98.1%	97.4%	97.7%	+0%
The online platform was easy to use	98.9%	97.3%	97.9%	+0.4%
I downloaded my exam paper without issue	97.7%	98.4%	98.1%	+1.4%

I uploaded my exam paper without issue	96%	95.5%	95.7	-0.3%
I received confirmation that my paper was submitted via the platform	99.2%	99%	99.1%	-0.1%

5. Open Book Exam Format

Candidates were asked about their experience of being permitted to use items within the exams, primarily study material or external reference sources.

Did you use these materials during the examination?	Yes	No
UK & Ireland	81.6%	18.4%
Global Areas	61.3%	38.7%
All Responses	68.1%	31.9%

Did you use these materials during the examination?	A large amount of the time	Some of the time	Not often	Not at all
UK & Ireland	1.7%	31.1%	54.3%	12.8%
Global Areas	2.7%	27.3%	45.0%	25.1%
All Responses	2.4%	28.6%	48.1%	20.9%

With '0' being very distracting and '10' being very help, how helpful or a distraction they were?	
	Average Rating
UK & Ireland	5.6
Global Areas	5
All Responses	5.2

Were you able to complete the exam paper?	Yes	No
UK & Ireland	39.3%	60.7%
Global Areas	24.9%	75.1%
All Responses	29.8%	70.2%

6. Learning Experience

6.1. Paper Difficulty

	Very Hard	Hard	Moderate	Easy	Very Easy
CM1A	23.4%	44.6%	30.8%	1.2%	0.0%
CM1B	19.2%	37.0%	39.1%	4.5%	0.3%
CM2A	25.6%	41.9%	30.8%	1.5%	0.2%
CM2B	34.1%	39.7%	24.1%	1.7%	0.4%
CS1A	17.6%	38.4%	39.3%	4.2%	0.5%
CS1B	26.6%	41.0%	30.0%	2.1%	0.3%

CS2A	73.4%	21.0%	5.3%	0.3%	0.0%
CS2B	39.3%	36.4%	22.1%	1.8%	0.3%
CB1	8.1%	32.1%	56.5%	3.3%	0.0%
CB2	21.0%	39.7%	37.8%	1.6%	0.0%
CP1	22.9%	53.2%	23.6%	0.3%	0.0%
CP2	12.6%	40.0%	44.8%	2.6%	0.0%
CP3	8.1%	38.3%	51.3%	2.0%	0.3%
SP1	12.7%	51.9%	34.2%	1.3%	0.0%
SP2	17.3%	52.0%	30.7%	0.0%	0.0%
SP4	29.6%	42.6%	25.9%	1.9%	0.0%
SP5	50.6%	37.1%	12.4%	0.0%	0.0%
SP6	42.9%	35.7%	21.4%	0.0%	0.0%
SP7	32.4%	42.7%	24.3%	0.7%	0.0%
SP8	20.4%	54.1%	25.5%	0.0%	0.0%
SP9	16.1%	47.3%	33.9%	0.9%	1.8%
SA1	22.2%	44.4%	29.6%	3.7%	0.0%
SA2	35.8%	40.7%	23.6%	0.0%	0.0%
SA3	20.8%	51.0%	27.1%	1.0%	0.0%
SA4	47.3%	50.9%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
SA7	51.6%	45.2%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%

6.2. Time Allocation

	Not Enough Time	Slightly Short	Enough Time	Too much time
CM1A	47.2%	36.9%	15.4%	0.4%
CM1B	34.9%	36.5%	28.2%	0.5%
CM2A	43.3%	33.6%	23.1%	0.0%
CM2B	49.6%	31.5%	18.5%	0.4%
CS1A	47.2%	30.7%	21.7%	0.5%
CS1B	59.2%	31.2%	9.6%	0.0%
CS2A	75.9%	18.6%	5.3%	0.2%
CS2B	55.0%	31.4%	13.4%	0.2%
CB1	13.1%	36.8%	49.9%	0.2%
CB2	26.4%	41.5%	32.1%	0.0%
CP1	41.4%	41.1%	17.5%	0.0%
CP2	45.4%	35.3%	19.3%	0.0%
CP3	15.5%	31.3%	52.5%	0.7%
SP1	29.1%	39.2%	31.7%	0.0%
SP2	48.8%	41.7%	9.5%	0.0%
SP4	35.9%	54.7%	9.4%	0.0%
SP5	45.1%	42.9%	12.1%	0.0%
SP6	64.3%	28.6%	7.1%	0.0%
SP7	52.2%	34.6%	12.5%	0.7%
SP8	46.9%	39.8%	13.3%	0.0%
SP9	35.5%	50.9%	13.6%	0.0%
SA1	48.2%	37.0%	14.8%	0.0%
SA2	47.2%	33.3%	19.5%	0.0%

SA3	27.1%	45.8%	27.1%	0.0%
SA4	50.0%	38.9%	11.1%	0.0%
SA7	32.3%	48.4%	19.4%	0.0%

6.3. Syllabus

	Closely linked to syllabus	Linked to syllabus in parts	Not really linked to syllabus	Very distinct from syllabus
CM1A	48.0%	45.6%	6.0%	0.4%
CM1B	41.9%	47.9%	8.8%	1.4%
CM2A	36.9%	50.7%	10.3%	2.1%
CM2B	31.5%	54.9%	11.7%	1.9%
CS1A	46.3%	48.4%	4.2%	1.1%
CS1B	33.0%	50.6%	13.4%	3.1%
CS2A	13.3%	47.1%	27.7%	11.8%
CS2B	23.4%	49.9%	19.0%	7.8%
CB1	39.2%	53.2%	7.0%	0.7%
CB2	30.7%	59.2%	8.5%	1.6%
CP1	19.7%	63.7%	13.9%	2.8%
CP2	56.1%	37.1%	4.2%	2.7%
CP3	53.7%	39.2%	5.4%	1.7%
SP1	31.7%	60.8%	6.3%	1.3%
SP2	30.7%	59.1%	7.9%	2.4%
SP4	22.6%	67.9%	5.7%	3.8%
SP5	7.7%	57.1%	23.1%	12.1%
SP6	42.9%	35.7%	21.4%	0.0%
SP7	23.5%	57.4%	15.4%	3.7%
SP8	29.6%	62.2%	8.2%	0.0%
SP9	41.1%	50.0%	5.4%	3.6%
SA1	14.8%	51.9%	29.6%	3.7%
SA2	23.6%	56.9%	16.3%	3.3%
SA3	11.5%	56.3%	22.9%	9.4%
SA4	1.8%	56.4%	27.3%	14.6%
SA7	9.7%	45.2%	19.4%	25.8%

7. Free Text Comments

7.1. Online Exam Platform

367 comments were received concerning their experience with the online exam platform. The recurring themes identified are, firstly, candidates were happy with the functionality and ease of use of the exam platform. Secondly, candidates requesting the ability to preview their script after upload but before submission. Thirdly, candidates experiencing isolated issues with platform downloads and uploads. It is good to hear the feedback that candidates welcome the email confirmation on script submission.

7.2. Exam frustrations

1784 comments were received about the 'frustrations' of the September exam session. A high proportion of these comments related to:

- The allocated time of the exam to finish the exam papers.
- The CS2A paper not containing MQC's questions which candidate for this subject has expected.
- Several candidates expressed concern about the speed and ability to write mathematical formulae papers in word. This is a recurring theme from the September examination.
- Candidates were unhappy at the timings of the plagiarism and referencing guidance that was emailed to candidates leading up to the examinations.

7.3. Suggestions for Future Exam Sittings

1348 comments were received concerning suggestions for future exam sittings. A high proportion of these comments relate to:

- Candidates requested additional time allocation or reduce paper length.
- A recurring comment from our global candidates was for exam time to be taken locally instead of UK GMT or BST.
- Candidates provided similar feedback to previous exam sessions requesting the option to handwrite mathematical formulas.
- Several comments were received from candidates expressing concern around the potential for collusion activity during the online exams.

8. Overall exam Satisfaction

Thinking about your whole experience sitting examinations in September 2020, how would you rate your experience ('10' being most positive)

UK & Ireland Average	6.6/10
Global Average	7/10
All Responses Average	6.9/10



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