



Americas – Global Student Consultative Forum

Monday 7th December 2020 – 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

Apologies: Dipti Kalyandurg (DK) – Student Representative

Item	Discussion Points	Actions
1	Welcome CTS welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised she would be the main point of contact for the Americas forum going forward.	NA
2	Notes & Actions from Previous Meeting Notes from the last meeting held on 17 June 2020 were agreed as accurate. MT gave an update on the actions from the previous meeting. 1. LinkedIn communication to students in the region to invite them to join. MT advised this action was still ongoing and confirmed that a request has been sent to the Communication Team. BB confirmed that initial discussions had taken place and the Americas group has now been created but remains unlisted. MT suggested that this action is picked up with the Communications Team again to check the progress. CTS to contact the Communications Team to check the progress of LinkedIn group for the Americas Region	CTS

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	<p>2. Provide the webinar on CP1. Will contact student reps if a recording has been made available.). AB advised that the two CP1 webinars should still be available to view on the relevant area of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) therefore students wanting to access them should be able to do so.</p> <p>3. Provide information on our Student Employer Contact network which an individual within a company can sign up to be. Following the June SCF and GSCF meetings a communication was sent out to all students representative to advise them on how to get their employers to sign up to be a Student Employer Contact. This information was also included in the mid-year newsletter. BB and AN confirmed this had been received.</p>	
3	Students Comments	
	<p>3.1 Exam Booking COVID-19 Correspondence BB advised that the exam booking process was fairly well received this session. AN agreed and commented that the communication received was very explicit.</p> <p>Feedback was discussed relating to confusion about pre-reading material for subject CS1B and whether or not this was to be included in the handbook. AB advised that there was some internal discussions as to which subjects were going to have early release of pre-reading material and a late decision was made to include the materials in the joining instructions as it was thought this would avoid any issues. AB apologised for any confusion caused as a result of this.</p> <p>It was discussed that when students downloaded exam files in the test environment they were in Zip folders, however, during the real exam they were not. MT advised that for the April 21 exam, the files for both the test exam and the real exam will be downloaded in a ZIP file folder. AB confirmed that this had been raised with the supplier and would be resolved for the next session.</p> <p>BB suggested it would be useful to provide a link to a resource where students were able to download the ZIP file extractor in case they did not have one. It was agreed that the sensible place for this to be provided was in the test platform.</p> <p>AB to ensure link to download the ZIP file extractor is added to the test platform.</p> <p>The overall feeling was that communication had improved ahead of the September session. However looking forward to future sessions BB commented that it would be useful if decisions could be made more promptly and therefore communicated to students at an earlier stage.</p>	AB
	<p>3.2 Online Exams Platform</p> <p>AB wanted to highlight the issue experienced with the new two factor authentication process. He stressed that it is essential for students to use the practice session as early as possible in order to identify any problems. Some telecommunication providers put blocks on out of country users therefore if students don't receive the message via SMS then they will need to contact their supplier to turn off the block.</p>	

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	<p>BB suggested a two factor authentication app would be worth considering. AB said this was something to consider in the future as it takes longer to implement</p> <p>MT asked if there was any feedback on the email confirmation after successful upload of the exam paper. AN advised that this was well received by the students she had spoken with.</p>	
	<p>3.3 Other – Exam Related</p> <p>BB commented that the timing of exams in the region was still a reoccurring issue. MT advised that there are limitations to what can be done at this time to resolve this problem however given exams have now moved online and need to be sat at UK times this is something the IFoA want to look at further. Exams have to be run at UK time for security reasons however possible options can be explored in the median term although there are no guarantees that a solution can be found.</p> <p>AN highlighted that the CP1 exam was difficult as this is a two day exam and had received requests from students in the region to see if the timings could be adjusted slightly. BB suggested that the exams could be monitored by IFoA staff in shifts however acknowledged this would not mitigate the security risks.</p>	
	<p>3.4 September 2020 Exam Questions</p> <p>MT advised that concerns regarding difficulty typing the CS & CM papers, now that they are online, were a big topic of conversation at other forums as some student's representatives would like to have the ability to hand write numerical aspects of the exam and include this in their paper. MT confirmed it was unlikely we could implement such a big change in time for April 2021 due to potential problems with the transfer of the paper onto the marking platform. BB asked if extra time would be considered for future sessions. It was discussed that next year's papers will be more adapted for an online exam therefore these issues should have been taken into account.</p> <p>AN mentioned that some of the SP papers were seen to be a little longer than usual which led to some students running out of time. Also there was a minor correction to the CP3 paper which was given at the last minute and suggested that it would be good to know earlier about any issues instead of a few hours before the exam. MT advised that any errors that do come up are taking into consideration during the marking process. Students are also encouraged to submit a mitigating circumstances application if they feel their performance has been adversely effected as such issues affect students differently.</p> <p>BB queried whether CP2 material could be sent out before the exam as although CP2 is mainly testing modelling practice a lot of time during the exam is spent absorbing the information and not actually modelling. MT suggested this could be taken to the Examiners for consideration and a formal response would be provided. AB suggested it could be that early release of the data could give the students too much of an idea as to what is covered in the paper.</p> <p>MT to look into the reasons CP2 material is not provided before the exam and provide a formal response.</p>	<p>MT</p>

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	<p>3.5 Tuition</p> <p>BB commented that ActEd material has always been really good although is still a big expense. Recent changes were seen as positive as they are now using a bookshelf platform which is more engaging and students are able to take notes.</p> <p>AN advised that the ActEd mock exam papers are very different to the IFoA exam papers and explained that students felt it would be useful if the structures could be more aligned. MT advised that although IFoA and ActEd work closely together, exam papers are not shared prior to the session. ActEd have only had one online exam to base their material on so as time progresses hopefully they may start to be more aligned.</p>	
	<p>Work Experience Requirements</p> <p>A recent communication and documentation was made available to explain the requirements of CPD and PPD. Students are no longer required to do CPD recording but are still need to complete PPD. There is also the Professional Skills training requirement which must be fulfilled, full details can be found on the IFoA website.</p> <p>AB to provide the website link to the Profession Skills Training information.</p> <p>Link provided below: https://www.actuaries.org.uk/learn-and-develop/professional-skills-training/changes-foa-professional-skills-training</p> <p>BB highlighted the issue that old documents remained on the IFoA website when searching on google. MT advised that because of the way the website is set up it stores old versions of document's. The IFoA are aware of this issue and are looking at ways to resolve it.</p>	AB
4	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>BB emphasised again the importance of the LinkedIn group for the region, as the group will open up the ability for members of the forum to keep in touch with students especially now that contact has been reduced due to the recent changes with exams moving online. It was also discussed that the exams remaining online going forward would be a positive thing as it will give more students in the region the opportunity to be able to sit IFoA exams.</p> <p>AN queried the recent email sent to all students to make them aware that cases of collusion and plagiarism identified during the session were under investigation and that those affected would be receiving a letter. This caused some confusion as the emails were personalised to individuals. MT clarified that every student who sat an exam received the email and it didn't necessarily mean they were under investigation. MT apologised for any confusion caused and commented that the wording of the email should have been clearer. Any student concerned should follow the instructions in the email for further clarification.</p> <p>Website Feedback</p> <p>MT asked for feedback from the forum on the best way for information to be displayed on the website. He queried whether the preference was for information to be presented on different pages on the website or for the information to be available in a pdf handbook. BB mentioned that a</p>	

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	<p>searchable PDF would work better for accessibility as students may not always have the opportunity to jump online. MT advised that the intention of only having the information in one place was to avoid duplicating the information and to assist with version control. BB has received feedback that the website is sometimes a bit difficult to navigate. AN agreed that the information should be kept in one place in order to avoid confusion. It was discussed that the IFoA need to make it clear to students which is the most up-to-date version of each document.</p> <p>Forum Representation</p> <p>BB advised this would be his last meeting as the Lead representative for the region as his two year term was now up. CTS thanked BB for his contribution to the forum.</p>	
5	<p>Proposed date of next meeting</p> <p>June 2021</p>	

Student Consultative Forum Feedback Return Form - Americas

September 2020 Exam Session

Topic:	Exam Booking COVID-19 Correspondence: <i>To cover feedback and comments relating to the process of booking exams, including COVID-19 related communication and guidance.</i>	
Student Comment	IFoA Response	Further Action Taken (if applicable)
The general sentiment regarding exam booking and correspondence has been positive. However, there were instances of complaints of severe delays in responding to emails (excess of 2 weeks).	We apologise if students experienced delay in receiving communication during the exam booking period. Due to the high number of calls and email traffic during the booking window, students will have experienced a delay in having their correspondence responded to.	
Regarding FAQ's and guidance, there are complaints regarding a lack of clarity with how work from excel was to be treated, 'at first they stated that it was fine to use excel and then at the end they changed that to workings copied from excel receives zero.'	Please refer to meeting notes.	
Confusion regarding whether there was pre-reading material for CS1B as it was not stated in the handbook	<p>Thank you for your feedback. We would like to apologise if you feel as though this topic area is not clearly covered.</p> <p>We can confirm that pre-exam materials were available via the Online Exams Platform from a certain date and time. The exact details of their availability (date/time) were provided in the exam joining instructions which were issued two weeks prior to the exam sitting.</p> <p>It is important that candidates review the subjects' pages to ensure they are aware of any updates. There is a CS/CM guide which is updated every year which includes if any of the examinations will have pre-exam material.</p>	



Communication and guidance was timely and detailed.	Thank you for the positive feedback, we appreciate that 2020 has seen some difficult times and we have worked hard to ensure that the delivery of the IFoA exams was success.	
Booking exams was a smooth process with no major difficulty	Thank you for the positive feedback, we appreciate that 2020 has seen some difficult times and we have worked hard to ensure that the delivery of the IFoA exams was success.	
Students mentioned timing of the exams is more strenuous for the 2 day exams (CP 2, CP 1) and request IFoA to hold the exam a little later in the UK time zone.	<p>Thank you for your feedback.</p> <p>Understandably when scheduling exams the IFoA cannot appease all candidates. We host exams on a global scale and have to ensure that all members are considered which is why scheduling later times for exam sittings are not ideal.</p> <p>When scheduled exams times we must ensure that all exams are fully supported, technical support is available and currently we are only able to do this by hosting exams at UK time only.</p>	

Topic:	Online Exams Platform: <i>For Online Platforms, this should cover technical questions e.g. equipment/software/download/upload etc.</i>	
	IFoA Response	Further Action Taken (if applicable)
Two way authentication method worked well and was easy to follow.	Thank you for the positive feedback, we appreciate that 2020 has seen some difficult times and we have worked hard to ensure that the delivery of the IFoA exams was success.	
Steps were clearly explained for upload/download and layout of the platform.	Thank you for the positive feedback, we appreciate that 2020 has seen some difficult times and we have worked hard to ensure that the delivery of the IFoA exams was success.	
Very positive sentiment overall. However, instances of persons not receiving the SMS code.	Thank you for the positive feedback, we appreciate that 2020 has seen some difficult times and we have worked hard to ensure that the delivery of the IFoA exams was success.	



	<p>We are aware of a handful of individual cases where an SMS verification code was not being received, this was due to location and area network issues. We worked heavily with our external suppliers to resolve the individual cases.</p> <p>If candidates encountered an issue, they should have contacted the Examinations team as advised throughout our documentation and guidance.</p> <p>New measures are in place for the 2021 examinations regarding the SMS codes and should resolve the majority of issues.</p>	
<p>“The test download functionality should use a ZIP folder instead of word/pdf file. This would allow the user to test how they will open a ZIP folder on exam day in order to access the exam paper.”</p>	<p>Thank you for your feedback, In some of the examinations more than one documents will become available when the exam materials are downloaded. In these cases they will come in a zip folder.</p> <p>For future examinations the equipment check will replicate the examination date so candidates can make sure they have all the software necessary.</p>	
<p>Idea floated to be able to upload scanned scripts</p>	<p>Thank you for your feedback, we appreciate the suggestions which you have put forward on how to improve our online exam delivery.</p> <p>We are currently working with our external suppliers who assist with hosting the IFoA's online exams to discuss ways to improve and progress going forward.</p> <p>During the exam session the Examinations Team were on hand to provide support and assistance during the exam period via telephone or email.</p> <p>We advised throughout our exam documentation and materials that if candidates encountered an issue, they had to contact us via phone. Candidates are responsible for ensuring they are able to make and receive international calls</p>	

Topic:

Other – Exam Related:

Access Arrangements, Mitigating Circumstances, Results, etc.



Student Comment	IFoA Response	Further Action Taken (if applicable)
With an increase in online exams the majority of comments surround the time of exams and requests to schedule them later in the day.	<p>Thank you for your feedback.</p> <p>Understandably when scheduling exams the IFoA cannot appease all candidates. We host exams on a global scale and have to ensure that all members are considered which is why scheduling later times for exam sittings are not ideal.</p> <p>When scheduled exams times we must ensure that all exams are fully supported, technical support is available and currently we are only able to do this by hosting exams at UK time only.</p>	
Results were difficult to extract from the ifoa website on the UK time stated, with some having to extract on the following day.	<p>Thank you providing your feedback, we are sorry that your result experience was not a positive one.</p> <p>Our IT department have been working on this to resolve the issue going forward. Results in December will be closely monitored and we are hopeful there will be no issues.</p>	

September 2020 Exam Questions: <i>To cover feedback and comments relating to exam questions.</i>		
Student Comment	IFoA Response	Further Action Taken (if applicable)
There were a number of comments centring on the difficulty in typing particularly in exam CM1. This led to increased complaints about the length of time given to exams	Please refer to meeting notes	



	<p>Where questions required the use of algebra, the examiners reviewed the mark allocations with the anticipated time taken in mind and also adjusted the questions to ensure the algebra required was manageable. The keystrokes guidance was written to help candidates with concerns about timing when typing formulae.</p> <p>As for any examination, if there is a general feeling that there was unanticipated and excessive time pressure, the examiners will review this when grading the papers.</p>	
<p>Expressed that there were “material issues” in CP2 paper1</p> <p>A suggestion for CP2 is to provide the background material prior to the exam similar to CP3 so that students can spend the majority of the time for the exam working on the model and audit trail than just trying to understand the scenario.</p>	<p>There was a mistake in a formula that was provided within the generic 'additional guidance' set out at the end of the paper. This is designed to be standard excel functions or actuarial formulae that may help the student. The examiners of course apologise for this mistake and understand that this is not ideal for students sitting the exam. In the exam many students corrected the formula and used that, some did not. The examiners made sure that students were not disadvantaged whichever approach was taken.</p> <p>Thank you for this suggestion. We will discuss this idea with the CP2 exam team.</p>	
Some SP exams were found to be lengthier papers with not enough time to complete.	The Exam Teams review the performance across the diet before setting the pass mark so any issues are allowed for.	
Generally papers were surrounding the material, broader application of the curriculum.	We thank you for your feedback.	
Positive comments on the paper pattern as it was found to be similar to previous years before April 2020.	We thank you for your feedback.	
Complaints were made with the move to multiple choice and the loss of possible “method marks” especially when the answer to subsequent questions relate to answers to the current question.	Students are advised to read the examiner’s report which is publicised after the release of the results which provides further details to the marking solution.	



Topic:		Tuition: <i>To cover feedback and comments relating to ActEd.</i>	
Student Comment	ActEd Response	Further Action Taken (if applicable)	
Acted material and study support was received in a timely manner with clear communication about it.	Thank you for the feedback		
Some students felt that Acted Mock exam papers could be structured to have a similar layout to the actual exam papers so they could test themselves better.	It's what we aim for and so we'll have a look. If possible, can students forward us any more details, eg which subject, then we'd appreciate it.		

Topic:		Work Experience Requirements: <i>To cover feedback and comments relating to Personal and Professional Development and/or Work-Based Skills, and Form A/B.</i>	
Student Comment	IFoA Response	Further Action Taken (if applicable)	
Some questions received as students wanted clearer details on the new changes implemented to the CPD requirements or a pre-recorded webinar where this may be explained in detail.	Thank you for your feedback. We will be updating our guidance on PPD in reflection of the amended CPD guidance.		