Professional Skills Course Participants' guide

2017

In conjunction with the University of Leeds

June 2017

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to the online Professional Skills Course

The course is hosted by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries in conjunction with the University of Leeds. This will be conducted via the IFoA's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Over a three week period you will have access to online learning materials, adapted from those used on the face-to-face course. A variety of interactive features will enable you to engage with fellow participants and with the course facilitators.

Throughout the course you will be guided and supported by the facilitators who are members of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries. They will be supported by tutors from the University of Leeds. The facilitators will contribute to group discussions and will use their specialised knowledge and expertise to help you get the most out of the course.

Contacting us

If you have any

- questions about the Professional Skills Course content
- technical questions or access problems

Contact the Online Education team at online_exams@actuaries.org.uk. You can expect a response within one working day.

How does the online course work?

The online Professional Skills Course takes place over a period of three weeks, with an initial 'Intro Week' during which you can check that you are able to login to the Virtual Learning Environment and access the online course materials.

You are required to login during 'Intro Week', so that any technical issues can be resolved before the course itself begins.

Please check:

1. **That you can access all of the course content, open any links and play the videos.**
2. **That you have been assigned to both a 'Course Group' and the appropriate 'Specialism Group'. You can check this by following the instructions in the 'Groups' section on page 9 below.**

In Weeks 1-3 you will be required to work through the course sessions, which include:

- case studies
- a video presentation
- a quiz, and
- mandatory discussion boards

Following the course timetable shown on page 3.

As you work through the course, there will be times when you work independently, for instance, reading the course materials, or completing the quiz. You will also be required to take part in group discussions and to complete some written group work.

What is expected of me?

Before the course starts you must introduce yourself to everybody using the 'Introductions Forum'

The course will take a minimum of eight to ten hours of your time over the three weeks. You will be expected to login into the VLE every one to two days to:

- read the materials for the sessions
- undertake the set tasks
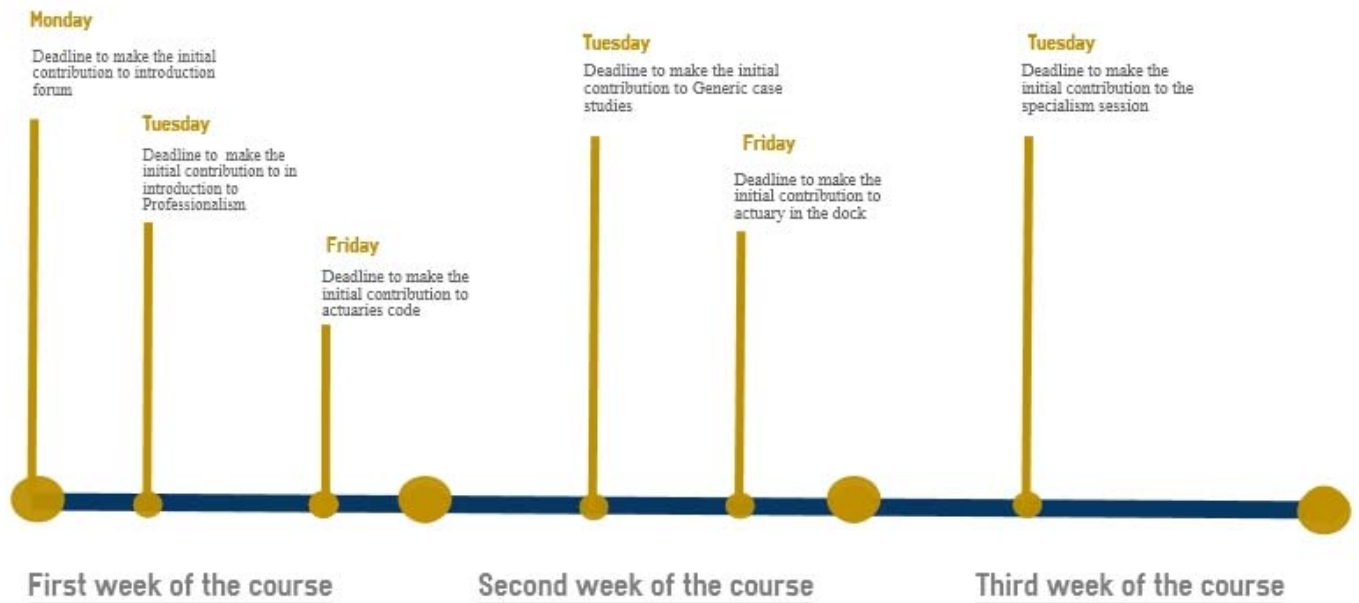- take part in the group exercises at the times shown in the timetable.

Course timetable and deadlines

The timetable below shows the period for each course session. You must meet the course requirements for participation in group exercises by the end dates shown.

Further details of each session are given later in this guide, and detailed instructions are provided in the course material itself.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Intro Week	1 day pre course	2 day pre course	3 day pre course	4 day pre course	5 day pre course
	Familiarise yourself with the online environment	Familiarise yourself with the online environment	Familiarise yourself with the online environment	Familiarise yourself with the online environment	Familiarise yourself with the online environment
Week 1	1 Day of the course	2 Day of the course	3 Day of the course	4 Day of the course	5 Day of the course
	Deadline for introductions in the 'Introductions Blog'				
	Introduction to Professionalism	Introduction to Professionalism	Introduction to Professionalism	Introduction to Professionalism	
		Initial participant discussion contribution due		Actuaries Code	Actuaries Code
					Initial participant discussion contribution due
Week 2	6 Day of the course	7 Day of the course	8 Day of the course	9 Day of the course	10 Day of the course
	Actuaries Code	Generic Case Studies	Generic Case Studies	Generic Case Studies	
	Generic Case Studies	**Initial participant discussion contribution due**		Actuary in the dock	Actuary in the dock
					Initial participant discussion contribution due
Week 3	11 Day of the course	12 Day of the course	13 Day of the course	14 Day of the course	15 Day of the course
	Actuary in the dock				
	Specialism session including presentation & case studies	Specialism session including presentation & case studies	Specialism session including presentation & case studies	Specialism session including presentation & case studies	
		Initial participant discussion contribution due	Question & Answer	Question & Answer	Question & Answer

Below you can find an infographic that shows the initial deadlines that you must meet to complete the course. The course places an heavy focus on discussions and to ensure that the course meets its purpose we ensure that participants contribute to all forums and meet the mandatory deadlines.

Monday
Deadline to make the initial contribution to introduction forum

Tuesday
Deadline to make the initial contribution to in introduction to Professionalism

Friday
Deadline to make the initial contribution to actuaries code

Tuesday
Deadline to make the initial contribution to Generic case studies

Friday
Deadline to make the initial contribution to actuary in the dock

Tuesday
Deadline to make the initial contribution to the specialism session

First week of the course   Second week of the course   Third week of the course

Failure to complete the course

All sections of the course must be completed within the timeframes stipulated. You must demonstrate you are actively engaged in the discussions by providing full and comprehensive posts. Once the course has started failure to complete will result in you being required to take the course again at a later date with a charge of £150.00.

Accessing the course

Once you have registered for the course you will be sent two emails which will contain:

The Friday before the introduction week to the course you will receive the joining instruction which contains:
- the participant guide
- the timetable

To access the exam in the VLE please go to the following link http://www.actuaries.org.uk/ log in to your user account as usual and then click in to 'My account' shown below.
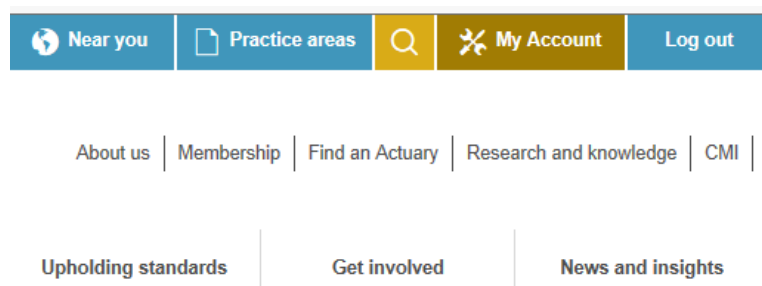
Now scroll to the bottom of the page and click in to 'My learning environment' shown below.

My learning environment
Access online exams, professionalism and CPD content

You will then be able to see your course. Click in to the blue box.
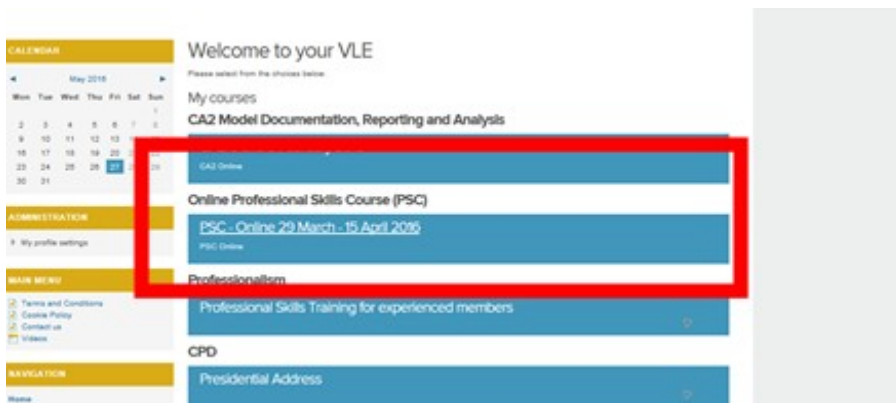
The VLE works well on most browsers, but the recommended ones are:

- Google Chrome II
- Firefox
- Safari
- Internet Explorer

To access the course click on the course you have been entered for.

Once you have received your login details and have accessed the VLE you will have access to all the course sessions and be able to look around and become familiar with the material.

If you have any questions about the course content, technical questions or access problems you should contact the Online Education Team at online_exams@actuaries.org.uk

Using tabs

To get the most from the course it is often helpful to have two tabs open in your browser at the same time. This allows you to easily move back and forth between the content and the discussion board or personal learning blog.

To open a link in a new tab

You can open a new tab by right-clicking your mouse over the forum/blog you want to open and select open in a new tab.
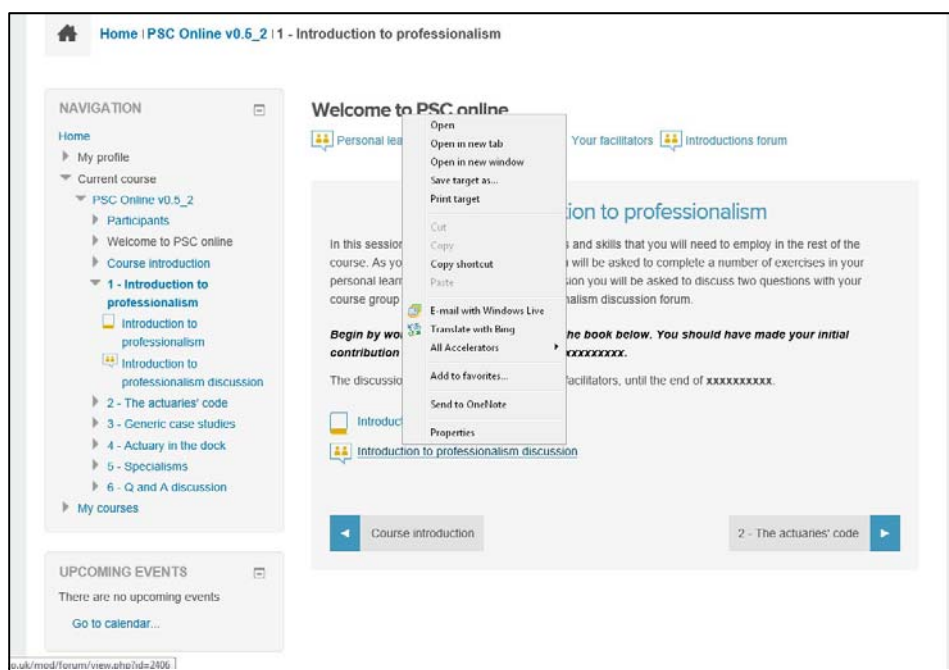
Session descriptions

By the beginning of Week 1 of the course you should have made an entry in the 'Introductions Blog', and read the entries from the other course participants. This is mandatory so ensure that you complete the Introduction Blog by the first day of the course.

During the course there are five sessions, each of which includes a range of exercises, and a group discussion. At the end of the course there will be a Question & Answer session with the course facilitators. You can post questions here throughout the course, but facilitators will only be contributing at the end of the course.

1.   Introduction to Professionalism
This session consists of several elements providing a rounded perspective of the nature of professions in general, professional ethics, and the particular structure of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries.

2.   The Actuaries' Code
This session draws on the lessons from the previous session and considers the conduct expected of actuaries by the Actuaries' Code.

3.   Generic Case Studies
This session outlines four case studies relating to the ethical issues that can arise in general areas of actuarial practice.

4.   Actuary in the Dock
This session centres around a 35-minute video of a dramatised investigation into the alleged misconduct of an actuary.

5.   Specialism Session
This session is a chance for you to focus on your own specialist area and to work with others in your field. You will watch a presentation from a specialist actuary before working through two topical case studies.

6.   Q&A
The course will finish with a general question and answer session. This is your opportunity to ask facilitators on the course any questions that you may have about the course content, any issues raised by the course, or any questions you may have relating to professional skills within the actuarial profession that have not already been covered by the group discussions.

Throughout the course you will be able to post any questions you have in a discussion board shared by the entire group of participants. At the end of the course, facilitators will be responding to these and any further questions that you may have.

Groups

There will be up to 130 participants on your course, so in order to make interaction manageable you will be working in groups of up to 30 in a 'Course Group'. You will be assigned to a Course Group automatically.

Each group will have its own discussion board where most of the group exercises will be conducted.

All participants will also be automatically assigned to their relevant specialism group, e.g. the Pensions Specialism Group. Each of these will have their own discussion board which will be used for the Specialisms session of the course.

Interactive tools in the Virtual Learning Environment

Throughout the course you will use a variety of interactive tools to help you get the most from the course, and to engage with fellow participants and facilitators.

Full instructions for the individual activities for each course session will be given in the course materials themselves.

Discussion Forums

The discussion forums will form an integral part of most sessions of the course. You must contribute whilst the discussions are active in order to meet the course requirements.
Each session will use a separate discussion forum and it will be found at the bottom of the screen in every session.
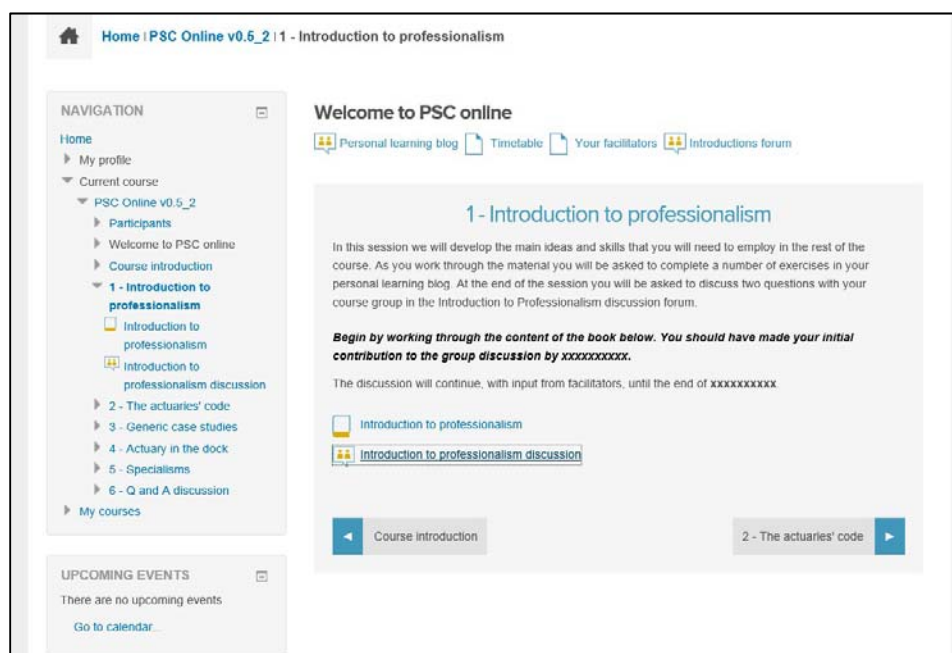
Welcome Lidia Smith   Logout

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Home ı PSC Online v0.5_2 ı 1 - Introduction to professionalism ı Introduction to professionalism discussion

Search forums

Separate groups: Group A

Please use this thread for the 'Introduction to professionalism' group exercise.

Discussion	Started by	Group	Replies	Unread ☑	Last post
Introduction to Professionalism Group Exercise	Course Admin	Group A	0	0	Course Admin Thu, 10 Apr 2014, 3:58 PM

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ı Introduction to Professionalism Group Exercise

Search forums

Display replies in nested form

NAVIGATION

Home
▶ My profile
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    ▶ Course introduction
    ▼ 1 - Introduction to professionalism
      ☐ Introduction to professionalism
      ▼ Introduction to professionalism discussion
        ▪ **Introduction to Professionalism Group Exercise**

Introduction to Professionalism Group Exercise
by Course Admin - Thursday, 10 April 2014, 3:58 PM

Please use this thread for the Introduction to Professionalism group exercise.

Drawing on the notes you have made in your personal learning blog, discuss the following questions:

- Aside from the fact that there is an organisation called 'The Institute and Faculty of Actuaries', does actuarial work constitute a profession? Should it?
- What kinds of ethical challenges are most likely to arise in the professional lives of actuaries? What principles or values will be most relevant to resolving these challenges?

Mark unread | Reply

The opening contribution post will outline the questions for the discussion during the session. Once you are clear about the questions, you can join in the discussion by replying to the opening post. It is not necessary for each participant to post their own full response to the two questions; rather, you should respond to what has already been said and engage with the other members of your group.

For all sessions you will be required to make your first post by the **specified deadline** on the timetable.

You will be asked to read others' posts and respond, interacting with the other members of your group as you would do in a normal discussion. For example, you might agree or disagree with something someone says,

you might want to seek clarification on a point someone makes, or you might want to introduce a new point that no-one has made yet. Your responses should remain fairly brief, and no post should be longer that 200 words, but it is important that you give reason for any view you put forward.

Online discussion works best with lots of short entries, each made up of one or two points. You need to engage with previous comments as well as the course materials. Remember that this is a formal learning environment and the same level of professional courtesy is expected as if you were meeting face to face.

Facilitators from the Institute of Faculty of Actuaries and from the University of Leeds will be contributing to these discussions:

- providing clarification

- responding to specific queries

- prompting you to think about the issues and the points you make in new or different ways

Blogs

Two types of blog will be used during the course:

- Discussion forums, and

- Personal learning blogs.

Discussion forums are used for activities where you are asked to make an individual contribution on a topic, which your fellow participants will be able to read and perhaps briefly comment on.

We will be using these for the Introductions session, where you will introduce yourself to your fellow participants through a short blog post.

Personal Learning blogs are private. The entries you make here are visible only to yourself and to the course facilitators.

Throughout the course, we will be asking you to make notes in your Personal Learning blog. These do not need to be perfect pieces of writing – the idea is for you to use this blog as a kind of notebook where you can record your initial thoughts make notes on a topic when requested to do so in the exercise instructions, or answer set questions. You will be able to look back through your entries to help you when contributing your ideas and knowledge to the group discussions.

Both blogs work in similar ways.

Add entries

You will find the group discussion forum in every section of the course at the bottom of the screen.

Here you will find a list of separate discussion forums. Simply click on the relevant forum question.

You will then see the forum thread.
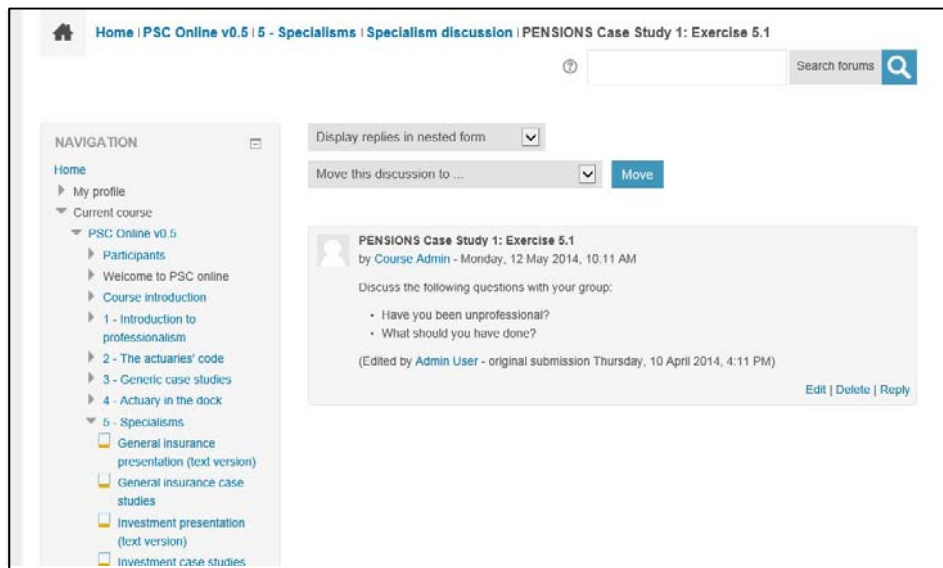
Replying to posts

If you want to reply to a post you only need to click on reply.
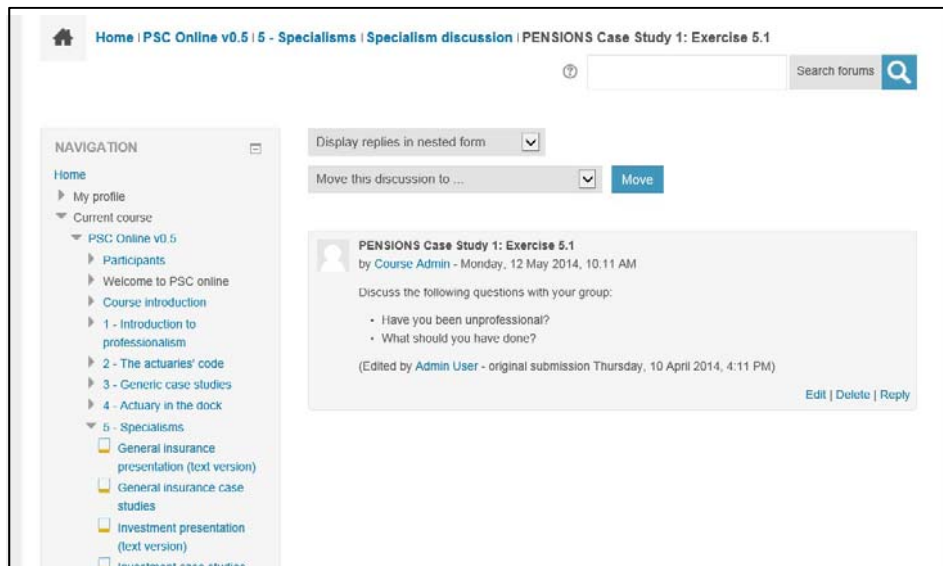
The following screen will show. Please write you text on the Message box, scroll down and click on Post to forum.

To make sure that the forum follows an organised system please click reply on the first thread with the questions.