

## Institute and Faculty of Actuaries

### Noting report

<b>Subject</b>	Programme of Reflective Practice Discussions with the IFoA
<b>Regulation Board meeting</b>	5 May 2021
<b>Previous Board Update/Steer/Approval</b>	02 September 2019 – Steer as to whether there should be a change in policy approach to CPD requirements
	11 December 2019 – Steer on proposals for new CPD Scheme
	14 May 2020 – Approval of final CPD Scheme and discussion paper from consultation
	28 May 2020 – Approval of final CPD Scheme via email
	01 July 2020 – Update on discussions with FRC
	17 August 2020 – Approval of CPD requirements in the Practising Certificate Scheme via email
<b>International issues considered</b>	Yes – CPD Scheme applies to members in all locations
<b>Author</b>	IFoA Executive
<b>Purpose</b>	Noting

#### A: Executive Summary

1. As Board Members will recall, the IFoA's new CPD Scheme requires all members to carry out a reflective practice discussion (RPD) with an 'appropriate person' and, if selected, to also take part in such a discussion with the IFoA.
2. This paper sets out the findings of a trial conducted to explore how the discussions with the IFoA should be shaped. The paper explains how the three objectives of the trial have been met, looking at how the discussions will be structured, will create quality outputs for members and what more is needed for them to be effective. Further on, the paper sets out a process by which concerns of non-compliance with the CPD Scheme can also be addressed in the context of the discussions.
3. The paper sets out how the IFoA's programme will be established to launch in September 2021. It provides the Board with information relating to the practical aspects of the

programme, most notably how many discussions the IFoA will aim to deliver, and the resource that will be dedicated.

## **B: Background**

4. The Board will recall that the new [CPD Scheme](#) came into force on 1 September 2020. One of the key aspects of the new approach was the introduction of reflective practice discussions.
5. The CPD Scheme states at paragraph 3:
  - “3.1. Members should participate in a Reflective Practice Discussion with an Appropriate Person every CPD Period regardless of whether they are selected in terms of paragraph 3.2 below or not.*
  - 3.2. Members must, if selected to do so, also participate in a Reflective Practice Discussion with the IFoA.”*
6. The purpose of RPDs is to support members in thinking critically about the outcomes of their CPD activities, how they have addressed their learning objectives for the year, identify any gaps in their knowledge or skillset, and thereafter build a plan for their CPD in the year ahead. These discussions should better the quality of learning that IFoA members undertake and better allow the IFoA to understand what more it could be doing to assist members.
7. The executive has been conducting a trial with the aim of designing a programme of discussions that are effective, suitable, and practically deliverable to launch in September 2021. With that in mind, the trial had three key objectives:
  - 7.1. To determine what structure the discussions should take
  - 7.2. To determine how the discussions can create quality outputs for members
  - 7.3. To determine what is needed for the discussions to be effective.
8. The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) had also requested the IFoA provide further information on completion of the trial, setting out:-
  - 8.1. The number of members that will be selected for an RPD every year, demonstrating this is a credible programme covering a significant number of members;
  - 8.2. The resource required to deliver this programme both from the IFoA executive staff and volunteers;
  - 8.3. The structure the discussions will take to ensure they are effective;
  - 8.4. How non-compliance with the scheme will be mitigated and addressed.

9. This information is covered in this paper, and has been shared in advance with the FRC. The FRC have not provided any written feedback.

## **C: Information**

### **10. The trial**

- 10.1. The trial commenced in January with seven members of staff and five volunteering IFoA members. The staff were of various grades with differing skillsets and included the Review Team's two actuaries. The IFoA members were all recruited from Regulation Board and its sub-committees and had varied experiences in terms of practice areas, experiences and careers.
- 10.2. The executive staff received training on learning models, coaching techniques and methods to support people critically assess their needs and explore how to take action.
- 10.3. In each mock discussion there were two people acting as the 'appropriate person' conducting the discussion with one actuary. Prior to the discussion the actuary was asked to provide varying information, such as a number of CPD activities, a note of what their learning objectives are (or were) and an example of a topic or activity that they had identified for the future.
- 10.4. In the first phase of the trial, all the actuaries (from the volunteers and the executive) participated in two mock discussions, one of which followed the structure of a reflective cycle and the second being flexible and free flowing. The focus was on helping the actuary reflect on each of the activities. In the second phase each actuary took part in one discussion at a higher level looking more at the actuary's learning objectives, how and whether these were met by the activities, and what their future CPD plan looked like. In the second phase the members of the executive that are actuaries facilitated the discussions to explore the value in having actuaries conduct the discussions.
- 10.5. Each discussion took place in the course of a one hour video call. The hour tended to be spent initially setting the scene for the actuary, spending about 30 to 45 minutes on the actual mock reflective discussion and then debriefing to share thoughts afterwards.
- 10.6. All participants were asked to complete feedback forms after each discussion and once the trial concluded. The trial also provided data to scope the time and resource

required for the programme. That feedback and data have been used as the basis for the findings set out below.

## **11. The findings**

11.1. This part of the paper summarises the findings of the trial with respect to the three key objectives.

### **11.2. *To determine what structure the discussions should take:***

11.2.1. Feedback from the trial indicated that the flexible, free flowing approach suited most members. Participants reported that this created a more natural, relaxed conversation which allowed the actuary to highlight what was important to them, whilst creating opportunities for the facilitators to probe further.

11.2.2. Most participants described the reflective cycle as restrictive and repetitive. The cycle did however serve as a good foundation or reminder of what these discussions are supposed to cover. Many participants thought the cycle could be utilised when the actuary is not so engaged perhaps by virtue of being unfamiliar with reflection.

11.2.3. Participants agreed that it is imperative that those conducting the discussion have the right skillset to support the actuary in reflection, and that these skills would be more important than any predetermined structure. Individuals have different needs and will have different reactions to these discussions so the executive will have to be well equipped and agile enough to deal with this on case by case basis.

11.2.4. Some members of the executive remarked that having two people conduct the discussion made it more agile. The presence of an additional person did not however add such value to justify the additional resource. It is suitable for the discussion to be conducted by one appropriately trained person.

11.2.5. As a result, it is proposed that the RPDs do not have a rigid, structured format following a particular cycle, and that instead a well-trained team are installed that is capable of supporting members reflect themselves. A small team would be most appropriate to ensure consistency in the delivering a high standard of qualitative discussion, with one person conducting each discussion.

### **11.3. How the discussions can create quality outputs for members**

11.3.1. The actuaries that participated reported deriving a number of benefits from the mock discussions:

- it prompted them to think harder about why they attended CPD activities;
- they were able to consider more thoroughly what benefit they derived from their activities;
- the discussion created an opportunity to reflect which wouldn't normally be an option owing to busy schedules and demands on their time;
- reflection would lead to them taking more care in choosing future activities;
- speaking to a different person away from the commercial setting allowed them to open up and consider personal development points, which is not always possible in the work environment; and
- they identified topics and areas to revisit, that might otherwise have been overlooked.

11.3.2. The participants noted that in order to create further quality outputs the following would be useful:

- crib sheets or prompts on particular topics the actuary might benefit from learning more about or exploring further;
- schedules of events other activities that could be referred to for that learning; and
- a follow up to the RPD, be it another conversation or correspondence to check in on the actuary's progress.

11.3.3. In conclusion, all parties reported that the quality output was the opportunity to reflect on one's needs, development and ambitions away from the workplace. Being offered a fresh perspective and further ideas on how to maintain competence and develop professionally prompted more careful consideration for the future, and thus would lead to more meaningful learning being undertaken. Equipping the executive team with material and ideas to help this, will ensure those outputs can be delivered.

### **11.4. To determine what is needed for the discussions to be effective**

11.4.1. In order to ensure the RPDs are effective, trial participants made a number of suggestions:

- to put effort into readying members for RPDs by setting up a call beforehand, or provide guidance, to explain to the actuary what would happen and set the scene which should put members at ease;

- to provide assurances as to what the outcome of the discussion could be, highlighting the confidential nature of them;
- dedicating sufficient time (in general, at least an hour) for the discussion;
- support members in reflecting on activities immediately after the activity has taken place to help address the potential time lag between the activity and the RPD;
- to ensure that the executive have the right skillset to conduct the discussions in the best way possible for all members, be capable of asking the right questions and challenging; and
- to have dedicated persons conduct the discussions to ensure consistency.

11.4.2. The key to the effectiveness of the discussion will be ensuring the executive facilitating them are equipped to support all members in deriving benefit from the discussions. This means having time set aside to prepare members for their RPDs so that they are comfortable with the concept and know what to expect. The team will be trained to help all members make the most of the experience but also have a process to fall back on in the event any problems are uncovered.

## **12. Volume of RPDs**

- 12.1. It is estimated that 12,000 members will be within the scope of the CPD Scheme once those that are expected to apply for non-practising status have done so. It is also noted that 1,200 members are taking part in the QAS CPD Scheme, and therefore also engaged in an outcome focused approach to CPD.
- 12.2. The executive will aim to carry out 600 reflective practice discussions every year. This will cover 5% of members in the scope of the scheme. Over the course of three years, this means a total of 1,800 members (or 15% of those within scope of the Scheme) could have an IFoA RPD. This is in addition to the requirements for all members subject to the CPD Scheme to have their own RPD with an Appropriate Person each year.
- 12.3. Under the previous IFoA CPD Scheme 10% of all members would have their CPD records audited annually. Although it should be observed that the previous audit process was quite different to RPDs and focused on whether the CPD met specific requirements and on verifying attendance rather than on outcomes and quality of activities.

### **13. Selection Process**

- 13.1. In the first year of the programme members will be randomly selected for an RPD.
  
- 13.2. Following the review of the Practising Certificates Scheme (and in consideration of other factors), it is proposed that a more risk based approach would be developed, whereby, for example, those carrying out work that poses a higher risk to the public may be targeted for selection. There might also be particular groups targeted over different years. The Regulation Board will be consulted on this, as will the FRC.

### **14. Compliance with the CPD Scheme**

- 14.1. The new CPD Scheme looks to move away from sanctions and enforcement as a means to enforce compliance with CPD requirements. As demonstrated in the trial, the RPDs allow members to better assess the quality of their CPD activities and how they meet their needs.
  
- 14.2. It remains possible that problematic circumstances might arise that require further steps. These include a member not engaging with a request to have an RPD, their refusal to share a CPD record, evidence observed in an RPD that the CPD activities are not sufficient in terms of quality (not being relevant) or length of time, or an inability or reluctance to engage with the reflective process.
  
- 14.3. The IFoA intends to mitigate the risk of such instances through the production of educational material, and a thorough communications campaign to raise awareness of the benefits and process of RPDs.
  
- 14.4. Where such circumstances do arise, the following process is proposed:
  - 14.1.1. Member is contacted to explain what issue has been identified.
  - 14.1.2. Support to remedy the problem is offered by the executive. This could include further discussions with the member where the RPD team explore the problem, why it has arisen and what the member needs to address them.
  - 14.1.3. The executive will look at CPD activities with the member to determine whether the problems can be addressed through further learning and development.
  - 14.1.4. A plan and objectives will be agreed with the member, with a timescale and regular check ins.
  - 14.1.5. In the event that the plan is followed and is considered to be effective, the matter will be closed.

14.1.6. In the event that the plan is not followed, or the RPD team consider there to be further grounds for concern, another RPD will be scheduled for the next CPD year or further follow up actions will be agreed.

14.1.7. Where communication is not forthcoming, or the member refuses to address the problems identified, the RPD team will consider whether the behavior amounts to misconduct and whether an executive referral is necessary under the disciplinary scheme.

14.5. At every stage the executive will aim to support the member in remedying whatever the identified problem is, whilst demonstrating a commitment to ensuring that that where potential cases of misconduct are uncovered they are appropriately dealt with.

## 15. **Resource**

15.1. The executive is currently looking at the appropriate resource to deliver the proposed programme and will take that forward over the next month or so, to ensure it is in place for the start of IFoA RPDs in September.

15.2. The team would aim to deliver 600 discussions in the first year. It is anticipated that after the first year, once the team are experienced and have a honed process in place that this number could be increased.

15.3. None of the participants in the trial considered it necessary to have an actuary conduct the discussion but some remarked it would be useful for them to have knowledge of actuarial work or career development etc. There will not therefore be an initial recruitment of volunteers but this will be kept under review during the first year of the programme. Advice will, however, be sought from practice boards and other relevant practitioner groups across the IFoA on how to frame questions and allow the RPD team to understand development of actuaries and their careers.

## 16. **Timescales**

The following timescales are anticipated to roll out the programme:

June – August	Publication of educational material, case studies and guidance on RPDs  Communications campaign, including bespoke video and webinar  Appointment of staff to manage programme and provision of training
1 September	Programme launches

**D: Recommendation**

17. The Board is asked to note the update.