



Student Consultative Forum

Friday 18 November 2016 Time: from 11:00 to 15:00 (Student representatives only from 10:00-11:00)

Council Chambers London

Attending:	Chairperson Exam Board Representative Representative from ActEd "The Actuary" Magazine Student Page Editor Representative for students with disabilities Glasgow Actuarial Students' Society London Market Students Group North West Actuarial Society Norwich Actuarial Society Society of Northern Ireland Staple Inn Actuarial Society Wessex Actuarial Society White Horse Actuarial Society Yorkshire Actuarial Society	Matthew Smith Luke Hatter Darrell Chainey Jessica Elkin Ruth Bryson Alex McLeman Alpesh Patel Rochelle Anderson Poppy Quinn Ciaran Harris Thomas Leigh-Eldredge Laura Orchin Alex Miller Tom Smillie	Apologies:	Fiona Watson - Faculty of Actuaries Students' Society Sam Kingdon - Bristol Actuarial Society Amber Buckingham - Channel Islands Actuarial Society
Via phone:	Chris Marsh – Welsh Actuarial Society Clifford Friend – Director of Engagement and Learning Nikki Edwards - Representative for students with disabilities Patrick Byrne - Society of Actuaries in Ireland Suzanne Wright-Smith - Birmingham Actuarial Society			

Executive Staff:	Registrar – Karen Brocklesby Deputy Registrar – Liz Harriman Chris Bristow – Head of Learning Samuel Harriman – Stakeholder Relationship Manager Registry Administrator – Alison Gorton	
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Item	Title	Action
1	Membership	
	<p>1.1 The membership was noted and the following new members welcomed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chris Bristow ○ Chris Marsh ○ Luke Hatter ○ Samuel Harriman ○ Thomas Leigh-Eldredge <p>Chris Bristow gave a quick introduction to the group about his career to date.</p>	
2	Marking Process	
	<p>Chris Bristow introduced this item and explained there were two elements of the marking process that should be discussed by the group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variances between first and second markers • third marking <p>Allegations had been raised on social media and in email circulation of systemically large variances between first and second markers. It was explained that the IFoA team in Oxford had carried out a thorough review of the examination marking to ensure the examinations team adhere to procedures. Over 15,000 scripts were being reviewed from the April 2016 examinations.</p> <p>It was discussed that in a higher education environment it was expected that a variance of 0-10 mark on a 100 mark total paper was within expected norms for independent marking and any paper with a greater variance would usually be considered for further review. There were exceptions; for example where the two marks were significantly far away from the pass mark where it was either a clear pass or fail. The team had worked through the majority of the April 2016 examinations and the variance was within the range 0-10 in 90%+ of the exam scripts for each examination. Those scripts that fell outside of the 0-10 variance fell into two categories: scripts with a higher variance but with the marks far away from the pass mark such that the variance did not affect the pass/fail grade decision and hence were not reviewed further, and other</p>	

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	<p>scripts which required a further review. In the most recent examinations the latter papers had been reviewed. It was acknowledged however that the data set held by the IFoA was not the complete in every case and that the audit trail needed to be tightened for future sessions.</p> <p>A discussion on third marking followed. It was agreed that further clarity was required. There were expectations that a whole script was remarked, but it was identified that this was not always the case. Examiners could in fact review or remark only one or two questions where there were significant variances, may remark the complete script, or may review the complete script. Any reviewing or remarking of scripts was confirmed as being performed by the Principal Examiner or a similarly experienced examiner in the subject team. The Principal Examiner may also standardise the initial marking to normalise any variations to ensure that no candidate is disadvantaged prior to any third stage moderation. It was explained that at this stage the Principal Examiners have the authority to apply their academic judgement to determine who a competent candidate is. Such candidates will demonstrate they have competency in the concepts and principles of the subject.</p> <p>A question was asked around the CA3 exam which was the initial examination of concern and it was explained that both CA2 and CA3 were still being worked through. However on the initial exams reviewed there were no major concerns.</p> <p>It was agreed that in the light of these discussions the IFoA would revise the content of the Student Handbook on the marking process as part of its commitment to transparency.</p>	KB/CB
3	Notes arising from the last meeting – Noted and no comments received	
4	Students' Comments	
	<p>The students held their pre meeting and identified a number of items that they, in particular, wanted to discuss.</p> <p>Exam Administration and communications September 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A response was raised regarding the timing of CA2/CA3 examinations. At the previous meeting the IFoA had requested feedback as to whether CA2/CA3 should sit before or after the exam session. <p>From the limited feedback received from the SCF group the majority requested after the session. However, when giving consideration to all factors it was determined that CA2 would run 2 weeks before the session and CA3 would run over a period of covering just before, during, and after the session. Feedback from the group was that some companies are concerned about having the exam period extended and that some students may be out of the business for long periods. A communication piece explaining the reason for the scheduling was to be released at the same time. Companies that have a Student Employer Contact would receive newsletters etc explaining these decisions and we encourage companies to get involved.</p>	SH

Item	Title	Action
	<p>It was noted that as part of the move towards curriculum 2019 both CA2 and CA3 (or their equivalents CP2 and CP3) would fall within the April and September sessions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A question was raised regarding the online booking and how is capacity monitored <p>SCF were advised that the IFoA monitor capacity and run figures daily of available places/booked places. Whilst it is relatively easy to increase the capacity of the online exams this has to be supported by the required number of volunteers to mark the scripts. With the exams that rely on physical locations it is not always easy to add to the confirmed accommodation and again there are the required resources to mark the scripts. If it is possible to increase capacity this will happen and it will be advised through the use of social media/website.</p> <p>Exam Questions and Content</p> <p>To fully answer the comments and feedback in regard to the exam questions these are included in the attached FAQ's.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CT6 comments concerning the style of the exam and how this varies. The CT6 exam was felt to be vague and had similar questions at different points in the exam, the SCF reps questioned what happens when there is a change of Principal Examiner and could this be the reason for the change of style. <p>It was explained that there is always a handover period when a PE changes and could be a reason for the different style of the paper.</p> <p>CA2/CA3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Questions were raised in regard to upload/software issues for these exams <p>It was acknowledged that there had been issues with sittings since February. It was regrettable that each issue was different and some had been rectified and others were outstanding. A communication piece around this was being prepared to illustrate the IFoA commitment to resolving the issues. It was acknowledged that similar to our traditional exams there will be occasions when there may be issues but the key was to work on the communication to ensure students were kept informed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Question as to why the CA3 FAQ guidance document is only made available 2 days before the exam <p>It was agreed that these FAQ's would be added to a guidance document which would be available to students before they sign up for the exam.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CA3 File naming and why there is no guidance on how to name documents before submission 	<p>EAH</p> <p>EAH</p>

Item	Title	Action
	<p>It was acknowledged that there is no requirement for a naming convention for CA3 as the system filters submissions and categorises under ARN, however it would be considered further</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A question was asked if the test presentation before CA3 could be extended as they feel this is too close to exam time. <p>The test presentation task has been moved closer to the exam date to minimise the chance of any updates to a student's system, between the date of test presentation and exam, which may affect their equipment's compatibility with the CA3 Application. Unfortunately though this does not rule out the possibility of technical issues, but does help to minimise the risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Question raised regarding the platforms that can be used to sit the online exams MAC/Windows/365 etc <p>CA2 is a web based exam and therefore any system can be used to sit the exam</p> <p>CA3 requires Windows and we appreciate that a growing number of students use Mac operating systems as opposed to PC. When the CA3 application was developed this was not the case, we are now working with our supplier to provide a web-based platform that is suitable for both operating systems in conjunction with changes to the CA3 exam</p> <p>When a new Microsoft Office package is published our suppliers will test it with the CA3 application, and the application currently works with all versions of Microsoft Office later than 2007. There are some incompatibilities with the Office 365 version, and if you are having any issues with this you should contact the online team as soon as possible who will advise on next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A query was asked if test presentations are watched all the way through to check for technical issues. <p>The Online education team watches each test presentation to ensure there are no technical difficulties throughout ie sound and picture quality. Occasionally if a student has had issues during the live presentation, this could be down to other things such as broadband speeds/software upgrades</p> <p>Tuition</p> <p>Darrell requested that when ActEd send surveys that all are encouraged to complete as this will determine the areas where tutorials be provided. For example, the Southampton CA1 tutorial only had 3 applications and ActEd can only provide tutorial where there is a sufficient demand. Wessex requested whether they could arrange a group tutorial if they could provide 10 students and if this could be held in Bournemouth, Darrell confirmed ActEd would consider this and they should contact them for more information.</p>	<p>EAH</p> <p>SCF Rep/DC</p>

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	<p>Other Student Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Professional Awareness Test (OPAT) – query around questions and moving through the exam <p>We appreciate that there may be some confusion between the ‘next part’ and ‘next question’ buttons on the OPAT platform.</p> <p>In the instances where a student has missed questions because of this, they should be provided with a new link to re-take the exam. The team will check the pattern of answering to make sure that the student has skipped questions, so as to make sure students are not repeatedly failing and retaking the test immediately, as students have to wait four weeks before re-taking after failing.</p> <p>We agree that there should be a consistent response to students who have unintentionally skipped questions and will make sure that those responding to this instance are aware of and following correct procedures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CT9 not all information needed was not immediately obvious on the VLE and some areas appeared greyed out and unable to open <p>An administration error caused a document to be missing from the VLE. This has now been highlighted in the procedures to avoid repetition. The greyed out areas is sometimes an issue with cache not being cleared.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was a concern from some employers that with more online exams there would be a shortage of laptops/computers and space <p>Karen invited employers to contact us with any questions they may have. The IFoA also committed to writing a piece about this in the employers newsletter.</p>	<p>EAH</p> <p>SCF reps/SH</p>
5	<p>Curriculum 2019</p> <p>Karen answered the queries around the roadshows giving different messages to the final version of the new curriculum.</p> <p>The roadshows were an opportunity to gather feedback on proposals and so were always subject to change.</p>	

Item	Title	Action
	<p>Karen confirmed that 'no more examinations' means the whole of the current is the same as the whole of the new. Everyone who is a current IFoA member studying for qualification has four exam sessions to make up exams not yet taken. The institute will be emailing students who take exams after each session to advise what they need to be ready for the transition in 2019. Karen also confirmed that CERA is unaffected by the new curriculum.</p> <p>It was asked if the criteria for the current CA3 would be removed. This will remain until the introduction of CP3.</p>	
6	<p>Student Survey</p> <p>Sam gave an overview of the student survey and explained that the findings have been presented to Education Committee. The numbers of students who completed the survey was low, 1300 from a potential 15000 students and Sam encouraged everyone to respond and to promote the surveys which we send every year. There has been a positive increase year on year mostly from our overseas students.</p> <p>Exam Dates 2017</p> <p>The dates for 2017 will be published on Tuesday 22 November 2016. There will also be a communications piece on the reason the dates have been chosen.</p> <p>Role of SCF representatives</p> <p>It was acknowledged there is some confusion around the role of the SCF representative. The IFoA will produce some guidelines on the role for those who choose to volunteer as an SCF representative, this will explain, what you can do and how to deal with difficult situations. Any representative who would like to be part of a focus group to develop this should email: alison.gorton@actuaries.org.uk. It was suggested a small working party of current representatives produce some thoughts/guidelines which the IFoA can utilise for future recruitment/induction.</p>	<p>SH</p> <p>SH</p> <p>SCF Reps/AG/SH</p>
	AOB – None	
	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Proposed date: 9 June 2017 in Edinburgh</p>	

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Forum questions and answers

Administration/Other

(Q) Comment about website traffic during results period

(A) Understandably, the majority students will try to access their results letters at the same time, which creates a large volume of traffic and can cause issues with the website.

We are aware that there have been instances in the past where the website has been unable to cope with the traffic at this time. An immediate solution has been put in place in advance of the September exam session results release which will help with this.

We will continue to work with our developers to try and improve this service.

(Q) Question about having learning logs signed off by previous managers if they are not contactable, and for more information about PPD.

(A) As you complete your learning logs you should get them signed off by your supervisor at the time of completion.

If this was not possible at the time, or you have since moved roles and you can no longer contact your previous supervisor, you should contact the Accreditation & Verification Team. They will try and help you get in touch with your previous supervisor, and if that is not possible they will suggest alternatives for you, depending on your individual case.

Further information about the Personal and Professional Development (PPD) scheme will be published in the coming months.

Examinations (Session Based)

General

(Q) Questions about whether the addition of reading time for the CT subjects was communicated and whether you can use calculators during this time.

(A) The first communication about the addition of reading time came in the May student newsletter, which was also circulated on our website and student twitter account. This was followed up by further communication in the August newsletter, and again via the website and student twitter account.

Before an exam session we would always recommend reading through the latest newsletter and student news pages to make sure you are aware of any changes that have been made.

Further to the communications sent out, the exam entry permits contain notification of reading time being added to the CT subjects.

Currently, calculators are not allowed to be used during reading time.

(Q) Question about use of earplugs during exams

(A) You are welcome to use earplugs during your exams to prevent distraction and background noise, but you will need to bring your own as these will not be provided for you.

The use of headphones does however remain prohibited.

(Q) Question about exam entry permit notification

(A) *We understand that it would be useful to receive this kind of reminder when exam permits become available. Currently, exam entry permits become available two weeks before the start of the exam session.*

We are looking into using an SMS system to provide updates like this, and will provide you with more information when this has been developed further.

At this point in time, we will continue to publicise the release of exam entry permits through the student newsletter and our social media accounts. It does remain the responsibility of the student to ensure that they download their permit and take it with them to the exam.

Exam questions

(Q) Question about the quality control process in exam setting

(A) *There are a number of steps in the process to ensure that papers are accurate. This includes scrutiny meetings, the use of 'guinea pig examinees, and both the educational actuary and the principal examiner sign off of the exam paper before they are sent for printing.*

Although all exam papers go through this process, there is still the opportunity for human error. Any errors that do occur, while not acceptable, are identified at the examiners meetings after the assistant examiners have marked their sample scripts. These can then be discussed and any adjustment that needs to be made can be communicated to the marking team.

(Q) Comment about the surprising amount of bookwork/commentary in this session's CT4 exam

(A) *The paper contained the usual balance between knowledge, application and higher order skills to test a candidate's all round appreciation of the subject. In particular, the amount of testing of the underlying knowledge (bookwork) and higher order commentary and assessment were around the usual level for this subject.*

(Q) Comment about CT6 Question 4 being badly written and extremely vague about what was required in the first part of the answer, leaving it open to interpretation.

(A) *As with all exam papers, the CT6 paper went through the full review process. However, if it does look like students struggled with interpreting a particular question, the examiners will take this into their consideration.*

(Q) Comment about CT6 having two very similar questions (proving/deriving that a random variable followed a Pareto distribution and finding the parameters).

(A) *Though the Pareto distribution was used in more than one question. The questions were testing understanding and application of different parts of the CT6 syllabus. The Pareto distribution is provided in the Tables Book (i.e. students are not required to learn the exact distributions or their formulae)*

(Q/C) Comment about ST2 being heavily weighted on distribution channels and then a large question on a non-standard product at the end.

(A) *The question was broken down into 8 smaller parts, the largest of which was a 17 mark question part. This question part was very typical of an ST2 exam paper, asking students to describe the risk to the insurance company of writing a specific product; such questions occur fairly frequently and normally carry around 15-20 marks. Well-prepared students*

who are able to generate a wide range of distinct ideas normally do well on such questions, and the test batch suggests that this will be the case again.

Students should expect to be asked questions on “non-standard” or “unusual” products, and not just the basic product types described in the course. In this case, the question was testing a combined understanding of a basic immediate annuity product with an understanding of how with profits business works, both of which are covered by the syllabus.

The question wording was lengthy in order to provide sufficient information to allow students to understand each of the key features of the product. These were carefully worded so that each feature was thoroughly described, including providing the basic formulae that had to be applied in order to answer parts (v) and (vi). The additional detail made it easier to tackle these later question parts. [As a more general point, whenever it appears that students have struggled to interpret the question wording, this is allowed for in the marking.]

The various parts of the question tested a range of different aspects across the syllabus (asset share calculations, with profits business management, risks to policyholders, risks to insurance companies). Well-prepared students have been able to tackle each of these parts reasonably comfortably, although parts (v) and (vi) have proved to be more difficult. However, the better students have been able to make good use of the information and formulae provided to make a decent attempt at these calculations, and markers are rewarding such attempts generously (high or even full marks are awarded for taking the correct approach, even if the final answer is not completely correct).

Narrow coverage of the paper:

Although two questions referenced distribution channels, these were coming from different perspectives with one mainly focussing on implications for risks, target market and experience, and the other on implications for product design and on demonstrating an understanding of the different types of direct marketing that can be used.

Overall, the paper tested a wide range of knowledge and understanding across the syllabus: general product design considerations, risks to the insurance company of a specific product, risks to the policyholder of taking out an insurance policy, risk management / data control, the use of guarantees and options, distribution channels, demographic and expense experience, with profits business and asset share calculations. Students should not expect a question on every part of the syllabus on every exam paper.

(Q/C) Comment about question numbering in ST7

- (A) *We are aware that, unfortunately, during the ST7 exam there was a gap in the question numbering, meaning that there was no question 7 in the exam paper.*

The content of the exam paper and number of questions was not affected by this, however, we will be making sure that more stringent proofreading is in place to reduce these types of errors.

Online Examinations (CT9, CA2, CA3 and OPAT)

CT9

(Q) Comment about the availability of booking CT9, and bookings showing as available when they are not

(A) *We regularly monitor the capacities of our exams and try to extend them where possible. In the case of CT9, an additional exam has been added in January 2017.*

When you go to book an exam the system should show the available dates with a blue indicator. Exams that are fully booked will be shown by a red indicator.

It is possible that this is not clear enough, and we can look into increasing the awareness of this indication system.

(Q) Comment about the CT9 pre-course work not being very useful/passive and dry

(A) *With the format of CT9 changing when the new curriculum is implemented in 2019 it is unlikely that any changes will be made to the current materials used. We will continue to monitor feedback about the materials used and look into making any necessary changes.*

(Q) Comment about poor administration of the CT9 exam (June)

- Missing information from the VLE

(A) *We apologise that not all of the required information was immediately available on the VLE for the students who were sitting CT9 in June. This was an administrative error and further checks have been put in place to ensure that this does not happen again.*

- Student given access to online test instead of online tutorials

(A) *Students will use the i-Coach website for both the pre-exam material and the online test, which takes place after the Business Game section. In this instance, one student was supplied with an incorrect code by the i-Coach team. Once the student made us aware of this we got in touch with the i-Coach team to resolve this. While we accept that this should not have happened, we are assured that this was an isolated incident and this is the first time that this has happened.*

- Wrong results uploaded for the Business Game

(A) *Again, this was an administrative error, which we apologise for. When the results from each team were uploaded, they were done so using incorrect team names, which resulted in incorrect results. Further checks have been put in place to ensure that this does not happen again. As with all online exams, the team were on hand to assist in this, and rectified the results within an hour of being informed.*

(Q) Comment that the online exam is significantly more work than the face to face exam, and that some students do not contribute as much as others

(A) *Students who were attending the face to face CT9 exams were also required to complete some pre-exam work, having the same access to this material as the students who sat online.*

The online exam and the face to face exam require the same amount of time on the Business Game element, however, the timing for the online exam is distributed over the course of ten working days. Students can complete the online Business Game outside of office hours, and each of the four sessions should each take approximately half an hour to complete.

Teams are instructed to decide who is responsible for which sections, what time they meet and for how long. If a student within a team is not participating, the online team will be aware of this already as they run a report to see who is contributing to the collaborative elements of the Business Game. However, if a student does feel that a particular student is not contributing an equal amount, they can get in touch with the online team to discuss their concerns.

CA2

(Q) Question about the technical issues with CA2

- (A) We appreciate that the CA2 exam session, again, did not run as smoothly as it should have. This was down the sheer volume of users trying to upload at the same time as each other, and the platform could not cope with the load. Work had been completed with our suppliers to ensure that this would not happen, however, the system still struggled and students still had issues uploading their work.*

Further meetings have been held with our suppliers to solve these issues as soon as possible to avoid this happening again. A procurement exercise will also take place to see whether other suppliers can offer a more suitable platform.

We understand that this is far from an ideal situation, and we that some students will have had a less than satisfactory, stressful experience.

As always, the online team were on hand to answer as many queries and questions as possible. For this exam, approximately 585 phone calls and 1,345 emails were received over the two days.

(Q) Question about CA2 being made face to face again

- (A) Before the exams moved fully online, we did investigate the possibility of utilising existing computer-based exam centres to hold these exams in. Unfortunately, due to licensing issues with Microsoft Excel, it has not been possible.*

Delivering CA2 online gives all students, both in the UK and overseas, the same opportunity and experience. At this time it is simply not possible to offer the same opportunity and experience for students sitting CA2 in the UK and overseas in a face to face environment.

(Q) Question about printing the exam paper

- (A) There is no requirement for students to print the exam paper, but they are welcome to if they wish.*

(Q) Comment about students receiving 'marker group' emails

- (A) This was due to an automation within the VLE system that notifies a user when they are added to a 'group'. Students are added to groups so that markers can only access the submissions they are supposed to, minimising the opportunity for makers to mark the wrong scripts, and ensuring all scripts are marked.*

In advance of the students being added to these groups we had asked our suppliers to block the automated message from being sent. We are disappointed that this message was still sent out.

To try and avoid confusion, we sent out an email to students to disregard these emails.

(Q) Comment about booking CA2 when it is your last exam to qualify

- (A) We understand that there will be students with just one exam to qualify that might face issues in booking another sitting of this exam.*

In this circumstance we would urge you to get in touch with us, as we will do what we can to try and get you a place on the exam.

There is still, however, a limit to the capacity that can be offered, and while we will do our best, we cannot guarantee a space for you, even if it is your last exam.

CA2 and CA3

(Q) Comment that CA2 would have been better after the main session

(A) To ensure that appropriate marking time is allowed for the exams, given the availability of our dedicated volunteer marking teams, it has been agreed that CA2 will take place before the session based exams. As CA3 is currently sat in cohorts, over a four week period, this will overlap the session based exam dates.

The opportunity for students to sit these exams twice a year is also something that has been taken into careful consideration when scheduling these exams. Having CA2 precede the session based exams, and CA3 in parallel, allows all students to have the same opportunity in sitting and receiving results from any exam twice in one year. In the case of the September exam sessions, moving both CA2 and CA3 after the session based exams would mean that results are released later and into the following year.

(Q) Question if CA2 and CA3 will be made available at other times than April and September

(A) Moving CA2 and CA3 into a twice-yearly format, joining the session-based exams near April and September, seeks to clarify that both subjects are part of the Associate and Fellowship routes, and will equally be included in the new curriculum structure with the same importance.

Going forward, CA2 and CA3 will be offered in a twice yearly format only.

(Q) Comment about receiving specific exam information/joining details sooner

(A) We do try to give information to students in enough time before their exam, but we appreciate that based on this feedback it might not be early enough. We will also look to increase the awareness of and information about online exams on our website.

CA3

(Q) Comments about test presentations

- Timing of the test presentation task

(A) The test presentation task has been moved closer to the exam date to minimise the chance of any updates to a student's system, between the date of test presentation and exam, that may affect their equipment's compatibility with the CA3 Application. Unfortunately though this does not rule out the possibility of technical issues, but does help to minimise the risk.

- Being given access to the CA3 Application later than others

(A) In terms of the sending of the joining email, and the dates in which students have to complete the test presentations, these dates were published on our website before booking for the exam sessions opened. This was to allow students to be able to take this into consideration when booking their exam. We appreciate that there is a lot of information available for students, and will look into making this more prominent. The joining email itself is sent 4 weeks before the exam session starts, and all students are sent their joining emails at the same time. If a student has not received their joining email on the same day as another, it may be that they have out of date contact details on their

record, or the email has gone through to a spam filter. In this instance they should contact the online team as soon as possible for their joining details to be resent.

- Changing minds about being able to submit by email

(A) In relation to the changing of minds with regards to the submission of exam material, this is not something that is done lightly. The team will only suggest this as a last resort if it is not possible for you to submit your work on the application itself

(Q) Questions about compatibility

- Not compatible with Mac operating systems
- Lack of compatibility with versions of Microsoft Office later than 2013

(A) We appreciate that a growing number of students use Mac operating systems as opposed to PC. When the CA3 Application was developed this was not the case and as two separate platforms would needed to have been created, this was not done at the time. As we develop CP3 for the 2019 curriculum we will be working with suppliers to provide a system that is suitable for both PC and Mac operating systems.

When a new Microsoft Office package is published our suppliers will test it with the CA3 Application, and the application currently works with all versions of Microsoft Office later than 2007.

There were some incompatibilities with the Office 365 version, where the Office suite did not have all of the components to run PowerPoint. Later versions of Office 365 have now included the required components, which means that the latest versions of 365 should not have the same issues previously experienced.

(Q) Comment about receiving email notifications about messages through the CA3 Application, and then having to log in to the CA3 Application to view the message

(A) The notification that students receive is automated to go to their preferred email address once they are sent a message through the CA3 Application.

We would like to continue to utilise the messaging function of the CA3 Application as it beneficial to use during exam days, however, we can look into having the text of the message sent within the automated email.

(Q) Comment about the application not working during exam (August)

(A) We experienced issues with our server security which meant the application was locked and unavailable for use. This was treated as a high priority incident and we tried to resolve it as quickly as possible. We made students aware that there an issue and advised them of some third party software that they could use to practice the presentation element in a similar environment.

The examining team were made aware of the issues so that they could take it into consideration for the exams that were affected.

(Q) Comment about technical issues, whether test presentations are watched all the way through, and extending upload times for people with technical issues

(A) Unfortunately, a very small proportion of students will experience a technical issue when sitting CA3 online. When this happens, there is a dedicated support team on hand to help them with their issues and students are able to apply for mitigating circumstances to inform the examining team that these issues took place.

The test presentations are watched from start to finish so that we can make sure no technical issues appear during the recording. Although this process catches the vast

majority of issues before the exam takes place, system updates or changes can take place between the test presentation and the exam that can affect a student's equipment.

We always try to finish the examination within the given time as we do not want this to become stressful for students. On some occasions however, it is necessary to extend the time for students to upload. It is important to remember that this is still an exam and deadlines need to be met, but, once it becomes apparent that a student will need to continue recording after the end of the exam, they will be informed that they can do so. This is a decision that is made by the online team on a, albeit consistent, case by case basis. It is therefore important that if students are having technical issues that they get in touch immediately.

(Q) Comment about being offered an alternative to the application to record the presentation element

(A) *This alternative was provided as a last resort so that the student was able to upload a presentation that was visible and audible for markers to assess. The team will have made this decision to ensure that the student was not continually re-recording their presentation with persisting technical issues.*

In these rare circumstances, the student is asked to record a presentation using third-party software, to make sure that they are able to provide a presentation for markers to assess. The markers are made aware in these instances and are able to download and print copies of the slides to mark alongside it.

OPAT

(Q) Comment about the confusion between 'next part' and 'next question', and the inconsistency of having access codes reset

(A) *We appreciate that there may be some confusion between the 'next part' and 'next question' buttons on the OPAT platform.*

In the instances where a student has missed questions because of this, they should be provided with a new link to re-take the exam. The team will check the pattern of answering to make sure that the student has skipped questions, so as to make sure students are not repeatedly failing and retaking the test immediately, as students have to wait four weeks before re-taking after failing.

We agree that there should be a consistent response to students who have unintentionally skipped questions and will make sure that those responding to this instances are aware of and following correct procedures.

Region specific

Bristol Actuarial Society

(Q) I received feedback that at the Bristol centre, the invigilators left the handing out of papers down to the last minute (or in the case of the CT5 exam this sitting, the last 30 seconds) before the start of the exam. Is it possible for invigilators to hand out papers earlier?

(A) The sealed packet of question papers should be opened in front of the candidates and not placed on the desks until all candidates have been seated. The Supervisor handbook does indicate that the papers and answer booklets should be distributed followed by an announcement to candidates to read the "instructions to candidates" as well as complete the front cover of the answer booklet.

We will be following this up with the invigilator for the Bristol centre to ensure that papers are handed out earlier than this, and further training will be provided to all Supervisors in advance of the next session.

Faculty of Actuaries Students' Society

(Q) Invigilators at Heriot Watt weren't sure whether or not it was okay to use the tables in the reading time for the CT exams. Student suggested that it is specified in the exam briefing

(A) The purpose of reading time is to allow students to plan the order in which they approach questions and to consider how they structure their answers.

Exam supervisors are given a statement which, currently, does not reference the use of Formulae & Tables in reading time. Going forward, this statement will refer to the use of Formulae & Tables in reading time, and supervisors will be reminded to contact the Logistics team if they are unsure of the rules.

Glasgow Actuarial Students' Society

(Q) The Glasgow invigilators should pay more attention during the 15 minutes planning time and enforce the no calculator rule. It was obvious that some candidates were using calculators despite this not being allowed. Simply announcing the rule at the start appears not to be sufficient.

(A) We will be contacting the supervisors to remind them that calculators are not allowed to be used during this time, and that they should be making sure this rule is adhered to.

North West Actuarial Society

(Q) The Manchester exam centre changed again for the September 2016 sitting and I have been inundated with complaints about the noise. The exam room was on the ground floor next to the street and noise complaints included:

- Conversations being heard outside of the exam room window (particularly for CA1 paper 1).
- People walking past chatting.
- People sheltering outside the window making noise.
- Noise from people hiring out other conference rooms at the venue.
- What sounded like someone throwing beer barrels around outside (during the CT1 exam).
- Crying babies in the next room which cried almost throughout the exam (during the CT1 exam).

I also had a complaint that the exam centre is 'a pain to get to' with limited parking nearby and not having a tram stop particularly close.

(A) We appreciate that there have been issues with the exam centre in Manchester. Following feedback from a number of students we will be seeking an alternative exam centre for the next session.

Norwich Actuarial Society

(Q) Norwich - A different orientation for the desks was used this sitting which resulted in a very cramped exam room. Many students felt they were far too close to others. We realise the layout changed so that students could face the clock, but it was felt next time the clock should be moved rather than the desks.

(A) Before each session, all supervisors are reminded that candidates should be seated at least 1.5 metres apart from the centre of each desk. The supervisor has been contacted again in this instance.

Society of Actuaries in Northern Ireland (SONIA)

(Q) A student noted that one of the invigilators was using a tablet throughout the exam. While in theory this is fine, she complained that the tablet was not on silent and was therefore distracted by the noise of the invigilator clicking on things. This is certainly an unnecessary distraction.

(A) We understand that this will have been inappropriate and distracting for the supervisor to be using a tablet during an exam.

Supervisors are not allowed to use any device during examinations, even if they are on silent.

Wessex Actuarial Society

- (Q) We now have around 60 students at LV= in Bournemouth who are taking exams. The student population has increased in the recent years and it meant that for September 16 exams some of the LV= students had to travel to the exam centre in Gloucester. Would it be possible to hold the April exams in Bournemouth as well as Southampton?

(A) Currently, there is not the demand to use exam centres in both Bournemouth and Southampton. When looking at booking exam centres trend data from previous sessions is analysed and bookings for that session are monitored to see if capacities are being met.

- Why can we not have sittings in Bournemouth for both April and September sittings – County Gates House facilities obviously meet health/safety/exam requirements and have better and wider desks. This again seems like the typical cost-saving, take it or leave it tactic. We are the customer and the institute is the product provider. A great product should not be ruined by poor customer service.

(A) When our exams take place in Bournemouth they are held at company offices, who provide their own desks. The Southampton centre is a designated exam centre, using a different supplier, however, the desks in both centre locations meet the minimum standard requirements.