



Institute
and Faculty
of Actuaries

Professional Support Service

User Guide

Contents

1.	What is the Professional Support Service?	2
2.	Who can use the PSS?	2
3.	How do I submit a query to the PSS?	2
4.	How does the PSS operate?	3
5.	Will my identity be shared with the panel members?	3
6.	Will my query always remain confidential?	3
7.	What will happen if the PSS consider that I have a duty to “blow the whistle”?	4
8.	How long will it take to answer my query?	4
9.	Can I rely on the guidance provided by the PSS?	4
10.	Can I raise the fact that I consulted the PSS and followed its guidance in my defence of any disciplinary investigation connected to the issue in question?	4

1. What is the Professional Support Service?

The Professional Support Service (the PSS) is a free service offered by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA) to its members.

The mission statement of the PSS is:

To provide all members with an opportunity to gain the benefit of our experienced panel members' views on professional and technical actuarial matters, in a timely manner, with a view to helping maintain the public confidence in the IFoA.

As a member of the IFoA, you can submit queries on the application or interpretation of:

- the Actuaries' Code;
- Actuarial Profession Standards (APSS);
- Guidance Notes; and
- Technical Actuarial Standards (TASs) issued by the Financial Reporting Council (the FRC).

As the TASs are set by the FRC, the PSS offers the views of experienced practitioners on these standards. The PSS does not represent the views of the FRC. If you have a query relating to the TASs, you may also wish to consult the FAQs published by the FRC on their [website](#)¹.

The PSS also responds to enquires relating to ethical dilemmas which you may encounter in the course of your actuarial work.

2. Who can use the PSS?

Only members of the IFoA can submit queries to the PSS.

Members of the public may direct queries to the Public Affairs Directorate at: Public.Affairs@actuaries.org.uk

3. How do I submit a query?

Before submitting a query to the PSS you may wish to consider the [case studies](#)² produced by the IFoA from some of the previous enquiries received to check whether your concern has already been considered.

If the case studies do not assist you can submit a query to the PSS via the [IFoA's website](#)³.

You will be asked to submit your name, a contact e-mail address and to select the broad topic area of your query.

¹ <https://www.frc.org.uk/getattachment/93397ef5-4540-4b36-9e32-6c87aa2822a8/Answers-to-FAQs-version-1-October-2012.pdf>

² <http://www.actuaries.org.uk/research-and-resources/documents/professional-support-service-case-studies>

³ <https://www.actuaries.org.uk/upholding-standards/professional-support-service/submit-query-professional-support-service>

The submission form allows you to identify the particular section of the Actuaries' Code, Standard or Guidance Note to which your query relates, together with the broader details of your question.

4. How does the PSS operate?

Queries submitted to the PSS are first considered by the IFoA's staff, anonymised and then referred to the relevant topic or practice area specific panel of experts for consideration. Panel members exchange their views on the query by e-mail before a final response is drafted by the IFoA's staff. The draft response is then considered and agreed by the panel members and the final response is sent to the enquiring member.

By drawing on the combined expertise of the volunteers who sit on the panels, members are able to benefit from a balanced and experienced view of the issues in question.

5. Will my identity be shared with the panel members?

No. The service offered by the PSS is confidential.

The identity of the enquiring member is not passed to the PSS panels and all identifying information disclosed within the query is removed by the IFoA's staff before the question is referred to the panel.

If the IFoA judges that the query and the answer provided by the PSS are likely to offer an opportunity for shared learning with other members, it may be developed into a case study. The IFoA will always obtain the enquiring member's permission before publishing any case study developed from a PSS query. Where a member does not give his or her permission, the case study will not be published.

6. Will my query always remain confidential?

The only circumstances in which an enquiring member's confidence cannot be assured by the IFoA is where it has a legal obligation to report information or where the query submitted to the PSS discloses details of an illegal act.

Depending on the situation, the IFoA's staff may first encourage the enquiring member to make the disclosure him or herself. If that advice is not taken, the IFoA may be required to breach the member's confidence and make the report itself. A decision to take such a step would be made by the IFoA's senior legal advisor, the General Counsel to the IFoA.

7. What will happen if the PSS consider that I have a duty to speak up?

If the panel believes that the query submitted discloses an issue which ought to be reported by you, you will be urged to consider your duty under Principle 5 of the Actuaries' Code, to speak up if you believe, or have reasonable cause to believe, that a course of action is unethical or is unlawful.

You may be encouraged to consider the Speaking Up Guide for Members produced by the IFoA, which is available on the [website](#)⁴. Additionally, if you are based in the UK, you may be directed to the independent and confidential advice line provided for IFoA Members by the charity Protect on +44(0)800 223 0177.

8. How long will it take the PSS to answer my query?

The PSS will acknowledge your query within two working days of receipt and will try to respond in full within 15 working days.

The PSS tries to respond to queries as soon as possible; however the speed of response will ultimately depend on the nature and complexity of your query.

In a small number of cases, the PSS may be unable to provide a full response within 15 working days. In those cases, the IFoA's staff will contact the member and explain the reason for the delay.

9. Can I rely on the guidance provided by the PSS?

Whilst the volunteers who sit on the panels of the PSS are experienced in their particular areas of expertise, all information and the responses provided by the PSS are intended as guidance only and do not constitute legal advice or any form of recommendation or opinion of the IFoA.

You should obtain independent legal advice where necessary or where you are in doubt as to anything provided.

10. Can I raise the fact that I consulted the PSS and followed its guidance in my defence of any disciplinary investigation connected to the issue in question?

Yes, the fact that you chose to consult the PSS for guidance on an issue is something that you can choose to raise in your defence of any disciplinary proceeding.

You should be aware that Disciplinary Panels are independent of the IFoA, that they consider each case on its particular facts and circumstances and that they will not be bound by any guidance issued by the PSS.

⁴ <https://www.actuaries.org.uk/upholding-standards/speaking>