



Institute
and Faculty
of Actuaries

Post-Exam Feedback High-Level Report

September 2020 Exam Sitting

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The post-exam survey was distributed to all 10,348 IFoA exam takers from the September 2020 session¹. A total of 3531 candidates provided feedback on their experience, which represents a 34% response rate.
- 1.2. Overall satisfaction for the September 2020 exams was **6.9/10**, an increase from the April 2020 score of 6.6/10.
- 1.3. Satisfaction with the IFoA communication around the exams was positive. It should be noted that the disparity identified between UK & Ireland candidates and our global candidates in satisfaction from the April session, has decreased for the September exams. There has been a notable rise in satisfaction around candidates 'being informed' of exam-related developments. Based on feedback from student representatives and previous feedback surveys, more direct email correspondence was sent to exam candidates during the summer months.
- 1.4. There has been a significant drop in the number of candidates reporting being able to complete all of the exam questions. 32.3% of candidates reported being able to complete the whole paper, compared with 55.5% of candidates in the April 2020 exams.
- 1.5. Candidates report high satisfaction with the online exam platform for the September session. This remains in line with the satisfaction scores reported for the April 2020 session. The introduction of the two-step authentication for security purposes was reported as being successfully implemented. The email confirmation of paper submission was well received by candidates and had been a recurring request leading up to the September exams.
- 1.6. The majority of candidates reported no problem in either downloading or uploading their paper. On a small number of occasions (176 of the 23,176 exams held) issues were reported with uploading exam papers towards the end of the 15-minute upload window. Of these 99 were authorised to submit by email, 47 were not authorised with the remainder requiring no action to be taken.
- 1.7. In regards to **Paper Difficulty**, candidates reported SP9, CM1B and SP7 being the most challenging papers this exam session. There was an average decrease in the reported difficulty of 4.4% compared with April 2020 session. The most significant reported increases in difficulty were CP2. The most significant decreases in difficulty were SA4, CP3 and CB1.
- 1.8. In regards to **Time allocation**, CM2A, CS2B and CP2 were reported as the toughest to complete in the allocated time. There was an average increase of 5.5% of candidates reporting being short of time compared to April 2020 exams. The most significant reported increases in the subjects SP2, CP2 and CB2.
- 1.9. The experience of the CS and CM A papers and time constraints of sitting the exams, in general, were the highest recurring comments concerning frustrations of the exam sitting. In regards to suggestions for improvement for future sessions, increased time for online exam and allowing a handwritten element was the higher recurring comments.

¹ Excluding entries on behalf of other Actuarial Associations

2. Exam Booking Experience (Very Satisfied & Satisfied)

Question	UK & Ireland	Global Areas	All
Experience of booking onto the exams online	93.1%	95.2%	94.5%
Customer service experience booking onto exams via phone	95.0%	95.3%	95.3%
Email correspondence after booking	94.5%	96.4%	95.7%
Experience of contacting Education Services	7.4/10	7.9/10	7.7/10

3. Covid-19 Communication (Very Satisfied & Satisfied)

Question	UK & Ireland	Global Areas	All	% Change April vs September 2020
I understood the arrangements for the September 2020 exams	90.2%	94.2%	92.7%	N/A
The IFoA kept me informed of developments	80.9%	93.2%	88.6%	+13.6%
The information presented on the website was clear and understandable	75.4%	83.7%	80.1%	+5.9%
The instructions emailed to candidates contained the information I needed in advance of the exams.	87.27%	93.6%	91.2%	+1.5%

4. Online Exam Platform (Very Satisfied & Satisfied)

Question	UK & Ireland	Global Areas	All
I was able to test the online platform successfully before my exam	98.8%	99%	98.9%
The Two Factor Authentication process was easy to use	97.8%	97.6%	97.7%
The online platform was easy to use	98.8%	94.2%	97.5%
I downloaded my exam paper without issue	96.3%	96.9%	96.7%
I uploaded my exam paper without issue	96.2%	95.8%	96%
I received confirmation that my paper was submitted via the platform	99%	99.4%	99.2%

5. Open Book Exam Format

Candidates were asked about their experience of being permitted to use items within the exams, primarily study notes. In the summer months, the IFoA has

Did you use these materials during the examination?	Yes	No
UK & Ireland	85.7%	14.3%
Global Areas	64.6%	35.4%
All Responses	72.5%	27.5%

Did you use these materials during the examination?	A large amount of the time	Some of the time	Not often	Not at all
UK & Ireland	2.2%	35.7%	52.3%	9.8%
Global Areas	2.8%	27.2%	47.8%	22.2%
All Responses	2.6%	30.4%	49.5%	17.5%

With '0' being very distracting and '10' being very help, how helpful or a distraction they were?	
	Average Rating
UK & Ireland	5
Global Areas	5
All Responses	5

Were you able to complete the exam paper?	Yes	No
UK & Ireland	38.5%	61.5%
Global Areas	28.5%	71.5%
All Responses	32.3%	67.7%

6. Learning Experience

6.1. Paper Difficulty

	Very Hard	Hard	Moderate	Easy	Very Easy
CS1 A	12.8%	32%	45.6%	8.3%	1.3%
CS1 B	17.1%	33.6%	43.3%	5.5%	0.5%
CS2 A	30.6%	43.2%	24.8%	1.4%	0%
CS2 B	44.7%	32.1%	20.9%	2.1%	0.2%
CM1 A	14.7%	38.7%	42.5%	3.3%	0.7%
CM1 B	53.7%	35.3%	10.6%	0.3%	0%
CM2 A	20.7%	48.5%	29.1%	1.6%	0%
CM2 B	5.4%	23.4%	61.2%	9%	1%
CB1	10.8%	38.4%	47%	2.8%	0.3%
CB2	5.7%	29.2%	61.8%	3.1%	0.6%
Later Series					
CP1	25.2%	55.3%	19.5%	0%	0%
CP2	27%	50.2%	22.2%	0.3%	0.3%
CP3	2.8%	32.1%	61.5%	3.2%	0.4%
SP1	20%	58.7%	21.3%	0%	0%
SP2	8.8%	40.9%	46.8%	2.9%	0.6%
SP4	17.2%	48.3%	32.8%	1.7%	0%
SP5	23.6%	54.2%	22.2%	0%	0%
SP6	N/A				
SP7	36.7%	48.6%	13.8%	0.9%	0%
SP8	15.7%	48.3%	36%	0%	0%
SP9	41.2%	49%	9.8%	0%	0%
SA1	N/A				
SA2	7.1%	56.1%	36.7%	0%	0%
SA3	19.8%	46.5%	32.6%	1.2%	0%
SA4	17.2%	41.4%	39.7%	1.7%	0%
SA7	N/A				

6.2. Time Allocation

	Too Much Time	About Right	Slightly Short	Not Enough Time
CS1 A	5.8%	29.5%	42%	22.7%
CS1 B	1.8%	34.7%	30%	33.4%
CS2 A	0.7%	18%	27.5%	53.8%
CS2 B	1.2%	15.8%	25.1%	58%
CM1 A	1.2%	25.8%	31.8%	41.2%
CM1 B	0.9%	20.6%	25.2%	53.2%
CM2 A	1.3%	6.8%	15.9%	76%
CM2 B	2.6%	22.8%	18.9%	55.8%
CB1	0.9%	34.8%	35.4%	28.9%
CB2	1.3%	39.4%	35.6%	23.8%
Later Series				
CP1	0.8%	17.4%	37.3%	44.5%
CP2	0.6%	13%	36.5%	49.8%
CP3	1.2%	55.8%	35.5%	7.6%
SP1	0%	21.1%	45.1%	33.8%
SP2	1.2%	22.8%	35.7%	40.4%
SP4	1.8%	25%	42.9%	30.4%
SP5	0%	37.5%	36.1%	26.4%
SP6	N/A			
SP7	0%	12.8%	22.9%	64.2%
SP8	0%	12.8%	22.9%	64.2%
SP9	0%	23.6%	36.4%	40%
SA1	N/A			
SA2	1%	18.4%	38.8%	41.8%
SA3	0%	25.3%	41.4%	33.3%
SA4	0%	29.3%	37.9%	32.8%
SA7	N/A			

6.3. Syllabus

	Closely Linked to Syllabus	Linked to Syllabus in Parts	Not really linked to Syllabus	Very Distinct from Syllabus
CS1 A	66.1%	31.8%	1.8%	0.4%
CS1 B	20.9%	63.5%	13.9%	1.6%
CS2 A	50.9%	43.3%	5.2%	0.6%
CS2 B	44.9%	42.4%	10.4%	2.2%
CM1 A	58.6%	38.6%	2.1%	0.7%
CM1 B	26.3%	48.2%	17.9%	7.6%
CM2 A	60.3%	37.1%	2.2%	0.4%
CM2 B	60.6%	35.6%	2.5%	1.3%
CB1	39.4%	53.4%	6.3%	0.7%
CB2	53.6%	41.2%	4.7%	0.4%
Later Series				
CP1	19.2%	59.4%	16%	5.5%
CP2	88.8%	8.7%	1.7%	0.8%
CP3	60.7%	33.5%	5.4%	0.4%
SP1	45.6%	48.5%	4.4%	1.5%
SP2	53.2%	44.9%	4.3%	0.0%
SP4	43.4%	50.5%	4.1%	2.1%
SP5	25%	57.4%	16.2%	1.5%
SP6	N/A			
SP7	21.4%	54.4%	19.4%	4.9%
SP8	39.8%	48.2%	10.8%	1.2%

SP9	12.2%	59.2%	22.4%	6.1%
SA1	N/A			
SA2	37.6%	52.7%	9.7%	0%
SA3	25.9%	54.3%	18.5%	1.2%
SA4	43.9%	50.9%	3.5%	1.8%
SA7	N/A			

7. Free Text Comments

7.1. Online Exam Platform

392 comments were received concerning their experience with the online exam platform. The recurring themes identified are, firstly, the exam paper files were downloaded in a ZIP folder, which was different from the format in the downloading test. Secondly, candidates welcome having an email confirmation on successful upload of their exam. Thirdly, candidates reporting no or few issues with the online exam platform.

7.2. Exam frustrations

1689 comments were received about 'frustrations' of the September exam session. A high proportion of these comments related to the allocated time of the exam to finish the paper. Interlinked with this theme was a high volume of comments concerning the CS and CM A papers which ran for the 1st time online. These comments ranged from guidance on how the papers would run released too late in the summer, to difficulties in typing mathematical questions in word.

7.3. Suggestions for Future Exam Sittings

1274 comments were received concerning suggestions for future exam sittings. A high proportion of these comments relate to the experience of sitting the CM and CS-A Papers. More specifically allowing for handwritten and scanned answers for particular numerical questions, increasing the time allocations or amendments to the length of the paper.

Increasing the time allocation of exams was another high recurring comment. Clear communications leading up the exam, with less frequent 'changes' was also frequently mentioned.

8. Overall exam Satisfaction

Thinking about your whole experience sitting examinations in September 2020, how would you rate your experience ('10' being most positive')

UK & Ireland Average	6.6/10
Global Average	7/10
All Responses Average	6.9/10



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