



Volunteers' experiences

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A view from a volunteer: Kyle West



Kyle qualified in 2015 and took the opportunity to apply to be a Guinea Pig 1 for the IFoA, here he tells us why and provides an insight into the role of GP1.

“Having just qualified I was keen to get involved in volunteering generally as it is a good way to meet other actuaries outside the bubble of your own firm and to support the profession. Throughout my time sitting the exams I always found it interesting and now I had an opportunity to learn more about the exam process. Offering to help assess future exam papers nicely ticked a couple of boxes.”

Experience of an IFoA Guinea Pig 1

“The fact that this opportunity was time limited (only available in the two years post qualification) helped me to decide to just get on with this.

Once involved I was surprised at how important the role was to the exams process. I had expected the exam paper to be very nearly complete by the time it came to the guinea pigs and the role would involve giving it a “once over”. I was pleasantly surprised to find that my role was far more involved than this. It required me to fully interrogate the paper checking that it was fit for purpose and that the questions were clear and unambiguous.

It’s clear that the examiners writing the paper really rely on this feedback to ensure the exams are right for the students and the guinea pig isn’t just there to tick a box.

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I enjoyed the opportunity to have a chance to think about whether the exam was suitable and to get a better understanding of how the papers are set. It was particularly interesting reviewing the paper and looking out for any idioms or content which could confuse, this is important as the papers are sat within an international forum.

The exams team really supported me throughout the process and it was great to get a better insight into how the papers are set for the students.

It was also nice to get positive feedback about the assessment I gave of the paper.

Taking on this role has shown me just how much the exams process relies upon volunteers. When you are a student a huge part of your life is spent thinking about the exams purely from a “how do I pass these” perspective. Getting involved in the GP1 role opened my eyes to how many people are involved, from examiners to markers and guinea pigs, and how reliant the process is on these people being willing to volunteer their time. The fact that so many people are willing to give up their time like this really shows the strength of our profession.

What will you do next?

This was a great first experience and I intend to keep on volunteering. I may be past the time limit to be able to act as a GP1 but there are still lots of other opportunities out there and I have a new found interest in the Volunteer Vacancies page on the IFoA website.