

Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, **Regulatory Board**

Subject	Learning Group update
Meeting date	14 May 2024
Author	Karen Brocklesby, Interim Director of Learning
Purpose	Noting

A: Summary of the enclosed document for noting

1. [REDACTED]
2. [REDACTED]
3. The Board are asked to note that they will be asked for a view on the exam platform principles and development which because of the requirement to work at pace is likely to fall outside a board meeting so views will be sought via correspondence.
4. The Board are asked to note that Education Operations Committee have not met since the last Regulatory Board but are currently reviewing, via correspondence, the 2025 syllabus and 6 accreditation requests.
5. As we seek to provide the Regulatory Board with updates and reassurance on the work of the Learning Group, views are sought from the Board on the paper presented.

B: Appendices

- **Appendix 1** - Learning Group update, May 2024

Learning Group – A summary of key matters relating to IFoA’s learning offer

Governance

Education Operations Committee

[REDACTED]

FRC

We have met with representatives from the FRC on the 24th April. The discussion focussed on next steps following the decision to cease work on the new online examination platform. The FRC expressed their reassurance at the direction the IFoA was taking in this area, as outlined in the Qualifications Transformation section of this report.

Examinations

April 2024 Examination Session

Demand for examination entry was completely met with 17,032 bookings and 16,497 examinations sat.

Two operational issues arose during the session:

Following the Economic Modelling (CM2A) examination on the 15th April, candidates raised concerns about Question 1 parts (ii) and (iii), and Question 5. Following an investigation into the alignment of all questions to the CM2 2024 syllabus it was confirmed that Question 1 parts (ii) and (iii) assessed a removed objective and Question 5 assessed a current objective.

A communication was issued to all candidates and a formal apology was published on the IFoA website. These confirmed that the error/ambiguity will be taken into consideration during the marking process to ensure candidates are not disadvantaged, and that should mitigating action be required, it will be proposed and ratified by the Board of Examiners before the results are published. Full information will also be provided in the Examiner’s Report.

The Health and Care Principles (SP1) examination was due to start at 09.00 on the 22nd April. However, due to an error in setting up the examination platform, approx. 300 candidates were unable to download the examination paper at that time. A manual fix had to be instigated and this took 30 minutes to resolve. Affected candidates had this time added to their examination session.

The team is now conducting an extensive post-examination review of all candidate scripts for any indication of inappropriate examination conduct. This involves loading every answer script into Turnitin software. This software was originally developed to identify possible plagiarism and it has been subsequently developed to perform checks for the originality, authenticity and similarity of scripts. There are then a number of checks carried out which can involve executive employees including education actuaries and the examining teams before typically approx. 200 scripts each session are identified as potentially breaching assessment regulations. Each individual involved is written to and offered the opportunity to explain why there may be an anomaly. An Inappropriate Conduct panel will consider the documentation including any response received from the candidate

and decide any appropriate outcome which can range from a dismissal to a two year examination ban. Whilst this work is resource intensive it is completed alongside the production of the examination results to ensure that affected candidates are not waiting for any outcome or result.

Qualifications Transformation

Improving our current examination platform

Following the decision to cease work on a new online examination platform, we continue to offer our examinations via our current platform provider, Trilby. We are investigating the addition of a solution to the Trilby platform to mitigate any reputational risk with IFoA candidates, their employers, IFoA members more generally and other key stakeholders. We are using this opportunity to consider whether this solution could be part of the new platform. A business case is in development and will be brought to the IFoA Board for approval.

Should the Board approve the proposal it is anticipated that identity checks and invigilation will be introduced for the April 2025 examination session. A full communications exercise will be undertaken to ensure candidates, their employers and other key stakeholders are fully informed and prepared.

Development of a new platform

A new project (Project Phoenix) will deliver this outstanding element of the Learning Change Programme (LCP) so the programme can be officially closed. This project will conduct the sourcing exercise to identify and contract with preferred supplier(s) and implement the end to end solution including integration with MS Dynamics CRM platform.

To ensure that this project works at pace and delivers the current Learning Change Programme (LCP) Board will be maintained whilst we transition between the learning change programme and Project Phoenix and the new IFoA governance model the lessons learnt from the LCP will be carried forward a steering committee will be set up to advise, prioritise scope and act as an assurance body for the project. All key stakeholder groups will be represented including the preferred supplier once identified and there will be independent external advisors to bring expertise, good practice and challenge the steering committee will have clear terms of reference including delegated authority from the IFoA Board it is proposed that the steering committee will meet every 4 weeks with a highlight report provided every fortnight to introduce greater agility and a closer relationship between those doing the work and those governing it. This will deliver the pace and enable key stakeholders to remain current and engaged a project group will drive the day-to-day delivery of the project including the timeline and prioritising resources, managing risk and escalating as needed to the steering committee. This project group will be resourced and work separately from the business but require subject matter expertise input from members of the Learning group, Finance and Communications teams.

A number of decisions need to be revisited to set the guiding principles and assist with the selection of a provider – these will be informed by discussions with other professional bodies and the FRC has provided further contacts at a number of the accountancy bodies where they have been undertaking research in the area of prevention and detection of cheating which will also be incorporated in our findings. These principles include whether a candidate can have learning material available to them

when they sit the exam, should we move to a hybrid model which would include the use of examination centres, the approach we take to sourcing a new provider, and do we consider the marking platform in scope for this work.

A paper will be presented to the current LCP Board with options and recommendations for their consideration. We will also be asking Regulatory Board for your views on the public interest aspects before we seek approval from the IFoA Board.

Generative AI in Assessments

The Learning group are considering the constantly evolving challenges and potential benefits of AI in the IFoA qualifications. There are two main strands related to this.

Maintaining the integrity of the assessments

Whilst the range of AI tools and their capabilities is going to continue to expand, misuse of these tools by a candidate whilst completing the assessment constitutes a breach of the assessment regulations.

Part of our program of work is around the education of our candidates and engaging with them to explain how it can be used and they acknowledge its use in their answer script. The team continue to review the evolving AI tools and recognise that there are still limitations to their use, such as producing inaccurate or inappropriate content.

A core concern is around collusion and the use of communications channels such as Telegram and WhatsApp and how we can prevent this. Project Phoenix provides us with the opportunity to reconsider how we prevent AI misuse during the assessment. There are technologies available to help prevent this and they continue to evolve to keep pace with developing misuse. To provide the necessary security around our high-stake assessments and mitigate our current reputational exposure in this area, there are likely to be some decisions required that may not be popular with the membership or employers such as locking down access to internet which is likely to involve downloading of supplier software and use of candidates mobile devices. Discussion with the FRC indicated that this was a direction that other professional bodies had taken and as part of the consultation, Regulatory Board will be asked for their views on this.

Alongside the technology development the team are working closely with the examiners to ensure that our exam papers have evolved and ask candidates to apply their knowledge to scenarios rather than produce formulae and theorems which can easily be plagiarised. This aligns with our development of the competency framework identifying the skills and competencies of an actuary at Associate and Fellow. AI is widely recognised as an important tool for actuaries and we anticipate that in the future we will include the use of AI methods and technologies in our assessment of skills and competencies.

Using Gen AI in the assessment delivery

There is potential for AI to improve how we deliver our assessments and support our members. The possible benefits of AI could include quicker marking times, ability to easily create informal assessments to support our learners, and improve the quality assurance of our marking. With the delivery of the new examination platform we will be launching a number of objective based

assessments. This will transform key parts of the Associateship qualification as these assessments will be delivered on-screen using a range of question types including multiple choice, multiple response, fill in the blank, extended matching, either/or, assertion/reasoning, and numerical entry. These questions can be machine marked and over time will provide the candidate with the opportunity to sit on demand rather than wait for an exam session potentially reducing the time to qualification. We have currently built assessments for our core business and finance subjects and continue to work on the core mathematics and statistics subjects.

There are AI tools available that can help check the accuracy of our markers which we have introduced with tolerance testing (identification if a marker is not in line with the marking schedule). We recognise that currently there are limitations to AI tools and they are not suitable to marking a number of our discursive exams or creating questions but the team are keeping a watch on the market as this will evolve over time.

We are aware that there is a discussion around AI at the June council meeting and we are engaging with council members to see how we can collaborate and support this.

Enhancing the Learner experience

The Team is reviewing and evolving the way in which we currently share information with examination candidates with a view to introducing short guidance/instructional media content to help candidates understand essential information. We are also working on harnessing appropriate technology to allow Learners to track their progress and provide tailored information relevant to their personal qualification journey.

Employer engagement

We will be reintroducing the annual engagement meetings (face to face and virtual) through which we will provide key updates on learning developments, and also obtain valuable feedback. We are facilitating online collaboration with employers via discussion topics informed by our Student Employer Contacts network.

University Accreditation and Exemptions

To support the Sustainable Membership Model (SMM) future members workstream we will be streamlining several processes related to university accreditation and exemptions. This will allow prospective students from accredited universities greater clarity on their expected outcome, will provide opportunities for joiners from non-accredited universities to gain more exemptions, provide employers with a potentially larger pool of employees with exemptions and cut their qualification costs. For the IFoA it will provide reductions in both cost and administration and make it more competitive as it delivers business friendly processes and widens the pool of students that can gain exemptions. The team are working to implement these changes for January 2025 launch.

Review of Curriculum and Internal Assessment Processes

In addition to the annual curriculum/syllabus review, the team are considering the relevancy of a number of current qualification subjects. A number of topics have been identified including machine learning, communications and business skills. The consistently low pass rate in our CS2 subject is

currently being considered and the team are developing proposals about how this should be approached. They will be engaging with stakeholders over the next few months and it is anticipated that a proposal around how to address this will be drafted by the end of this year for recommendation to the Education Operations Committee and subsequently the IFoA Board. The education cycle is to allow our stakeholders 12 months notice where possible so any future changes would be introduced in 2026.

The team are considering internal assessment processes to ensure that they meet the needs of members and key stakeholders utilising feedback received from the 2023 member survey and the post examination candidate surveys. A program of work will be developed linking to our CRM and other technology developments and shared with key Boards and stakeholders.

Our Career-Long Learning Offer

In addition to exploring career-long learning offerings in softer skills and enhancing our data science offering, the team is also exploring how to better curate the wealth of material already available via our website and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). This speaks directly to feedback received to improve the member experience.

DEI in actuarial learning

Whilst we provide an annual assurance report from the Board of Examiners about the standards of our qualifications there is a challenge to ensure that our processes and outcomes are fair and consistent to all learners. We recognise that our candidates are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse and have differing study support mechanisms and we are committed to actively working to tackling any inequalities. We are working on evolving the data held about our candidates including the variation in pass rates, outcomes by ethnic group and geographical regions along with any other data analysis we currently capture to determine where any inequalities may be arising and what we can do to reduce them. We are aiming to share our initial findings at the July Regulatory Board meeting which will then be subsequently shared with a future IFoA Board meeting.