



THE INSTITUTE
OF CHARTERED
ACCOUNTANTS
IN ENGLAND AND WALES

ISSUE 41 | AUGUST 2009 THE MAGAZINE FOR ICAEW STUDENTS

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**THE INSTITUTE
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ACCOUNTANTS**
IN ENGLAND AND WALES

VITAL

AUGUST 2009



WELCOME

Welcome to the August edition of *VITAL* and a very warm welcome to the ICAEW for those of you who are just starting your ACA training. We look forward to welcoming you to the ICAEW at one of our events soon.

At the end of last year, we asked you for your views about the current resources we provide you as ACA students. Your response was fantastic – thank you. As a result, this year we have launched a new exam resources area on our website and an e-newsletter to keep you updated on ACA training news. And we have launched the first student network in Russia. In this issue of *VITAL*, we are pleased to announce two new resources: the launch of the student online community and the South East Asia Student Network.

For those of you who haven't received *VITAL* before, it will keep you up to date with the latest resources from the ICAEW, examiners feedback, study resources, ACA training and ICAEW news. We hope you find *VITAL* useful in supporting you with your studies with us. If you have any suggestions or comments about the magazine, please email us at VITAL@icaew.com

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VITAL DETAILS

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INSPIRING CONFIDENCE

ACA NEWS

WANT TO GAIN AN ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATION WITH YOUR ACA?

Gain the Certificate in Finance, Accounting and Business while studying for the ACA. We offer credit for prior learning/exemptions to ACA students. For more information visit www.icaew.com/cfab

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING

Women are edging their male peers off centre stage when it comes to qualifying as ACAs. Not only are the numbers now signing training contracts up to 41% of the total but they regularly outclass the boys with their exam results. Take the March 2009 Professional Stage results: six of the eight prize-winners were women, taking first place in Audit and Assurance, Financial Accounting, Taxation, Business Strategy, Financial Management (joint) and the AAT top-up paper in Financial Accounting.

This is an extract from an article which first appeared in *Accountancy* magazine.

CHANGES TO THE RECORDING OF TECHNICAL WORK EXPERIENCE

All new ACA students registered after 1 July 2009 will need to complete the new **evidence of technical work experience (ETWE) form**. This is to comply with requirements made by the Professional Oversight Board. If you registered as a student before 1 July 2009 you can use this new ETWE form, or you can continue to use the previous one, although it is no longer available to download.

For more information visit the work experience area of the website www.icaew.com/acastudents



CHECK YOUR EXAM STATUS ONLINE

If you want to check which exams you have applied for, withdraw or change the venue for your exam or get a copy of your exam admission letter visit the 'apply for exams' section of the website at www.icaew.com/acastudents

Make sure we send your exam results to the right address. To update your contact details, visit www.icaew.com/acastudents

EXAM FEE REFUND DEADLINE HAS NOW CHANGED

From 1 June 2009, the **examination fee refund deadline changes** to the **MONDAY** three weeks before the exam session, at 17.15 UK time.

For more information visit the exams area of the website www.icaew.com/acastudents

SWINE FLU NO CHANGE TO SCHEDULED ACA EXAMS

We currently have no plans to cancel any ICAEW exams. We are monitoring the situation closely and will contact you directly if any further action is required.

EXAM DATES

6 August – exam entry deadline for September Professional Stage application modules

7,8,9 September – Professional Stage application modules exams

1 October – entry deadline for November Advanced Stage exams

16 October – exam results released for September Professional Stage application modules

2,3,4 November – Advanced Stage exams

11 December – exam results released for November Advanced Stage modules

Professional Stage – knowledge modules e-assessments

For guidance on applying for e-assessments visit www.icaew.com/e-assessment

Apply for exams online at www.icaew.com/examapplication

INSPIRING ACA STUDENTS WIN INAUGURAL AWARDS

The ICAEW Foundation has joined together with CABA, the Chartered Accountants' Benevolent Association, to sponsor the ICAEW Foundation and CABA Inspiration Awards.

Launched earlier in 2009, the awards recognise ACA students worldwide who have demonstrated exceptional qualities in overcoming significant personal, social or financial adversity to maintain or complete their studies.

Nominations were sought around the world from a wide range of people including ICAEW members, students and staff, district societies, regional offices, practising firms and tutorial organisations.

The original plan was to present one award with runners-up but the selection panel was so impressed with the outstanding qualities of the nominated candidates that they decided to make four equal awards this year.

The winners of the 2009 Inspiration Awards are:

Sophie Campkin, a trainee at HW Fisher in London, UK

Richard Cartwright of KPMG Southampton, UK

Andy Cheng of Jianguo Suyajincheng in Nanjing, China

Howard Taylor of PricewaterhouseCoopers in London, UK

The three UK-based winners were presented with their awards by ICAEW President David Furst and CABA Chief Executive Kath Haines at a lunch held in their honour at Chartered Accountants' Hall on 19 May. Andy Cheng received his award from ICAEW Chief Executive Michael Izza earlier in the month at the ICAEW's graduation ceremony in China.



David Furst, Immediate Past President of the ICAEW (far left) pictured with three of this year's winners – Richard Cartwright, Sophie Campkin and Howard Taylor and Kath Haines, CABA Chief Executive (far right)

'Each of our award winners has overcome real adversity to pursue their ACA studies and their experiences offer a great inspiration to others contemplating a career in the profession,' David Furst said. 'Theirs is a fantastic story which brings to life both the aims of the Foundation and the range of services that CABA has to offer.'

For more information about the Inspiration Awards and this year's winners read the June edition of *Accountancy* magazine or visit www.icaew.com/foundation

WHAT IS THE ICAEW FOUNDATION?

The Foundation was launched in 2007 to provide today's generation with the opportunity to shape the future of the profession. It aims to provide funds for bursaries for disadvantaged students, new contemporary prizes and groundbreaking research, and to establish closer links with academia.

WHAT IS CABA?

Since 1886, CABA has supported ICAEW members, both current and former, and their families who are experiencing difficulties. It offers a range of services providing practical, emotional and financial support. It has recently expanded its remit to include ACA students actively studying for their ICAEW qualification. The support provided depends on individual circumstances. CABA is completely independent of the ICAEW and any information disclosed is treated in the strictest of confidence.

For further information visit www.caba.org.uk or telephone **0800 008 7007** or **+44 (0)1788 556366**.

This is an extract from an article which first appeared in *Accountancy* magazine.

STUDENT COMMUNITY GOES ONLINE

From 12 August 2009 ACA and Certificate in Finance, Accounting and Business students are set to benefit from an innovative new resource.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) new online student community will provide a range of support functions, including a forum to discuss industry news and developments, blogs, articles and guidance on relevant topics to support you during your studies as well as providing you with greater social networking opportunities with other students.

Keep up to date with the activities of the student societies and networks and gain support as you progress with your training and wider career ambitions.

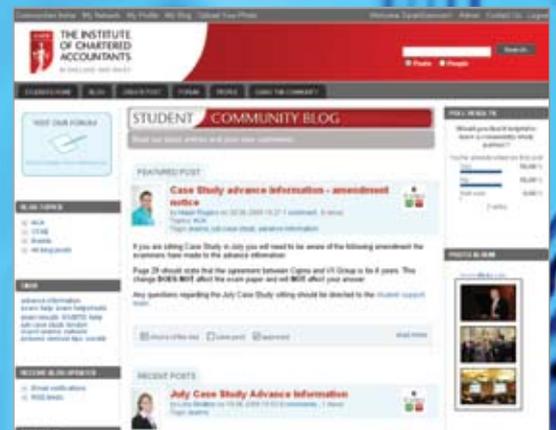
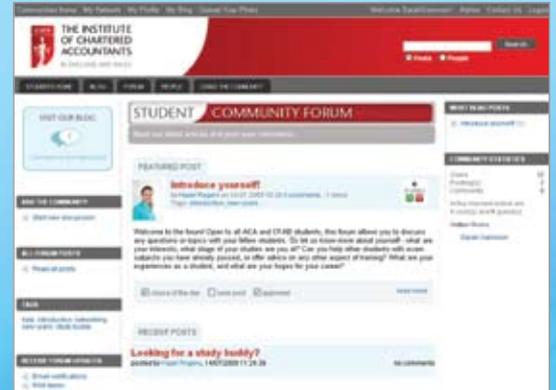
Membership of the online community is open to all ACA and CFAB students wherever you are located in the world.

Research undertaken last year among ACA students suggested that there is strong support for the idea of a global online community, especially among those based outside of the UK. As the ICAEW expands internationally, a greater proportion of ACA and CFAB students are now living abroad.

'The concept of social networking has become an integral part of society,' explained James Bulloss, chair of the ICAEW Student Council and a key driver behind the development of the community. 'The growth of the ICAEW around the world, with the launch of the South East Asia and Russia student networks, means that the chance to share experiences and knowledge on a global basis now exists.

'The student community is a fantastic opportunity for all students to have a forum outside of their immediate location and year group, and also gain a greater affinity with the Institute of which they will ultimately become a member.'

For more information about the ICAEW online student community contact Deborah Hartog on +44 (0)20 7920 8609 or look out for your email inviting you to join the community in August.



ARE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS UP TO DATE?

Visit www.icaew.com/acastudents and update your contact details to make sure that you receive all the information about the online community when it launches in August.

WORKING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

In the current economic climate, the financial sector is facing greater scrutiny than ever before, and the accountancy profession has risen to the challenge of a new, higher profile. It's now more important than ever for the ICAEW to engage with the people setting the agendas and making laws and regulations which affect the profession, and the economy more broadly.

The ICAEW's public affairs team coordinates the Institute's political engagement, working in Westminster, Brussels and across the world to represent the Institute and the profession. As the Institute was founded by Royal Charter, we campaign in the public interest to promote enterprise, innovation and sustained growth in a socially responsible business environment.

Here's just a brief snapshot of some of the work the ICAEW public affairs team has been doing over the past few months.

- Ahead of this year's crucial **G20 summit in London**, ICAEW successfully campaigned for a single set of high-quality **global accounting standards** with our representation to the G20, launching it at our G20 seminar with political leaders from across Europe and hosting a G20 event with Financial Secretary to the Treasury Stephen Timms.
- On the major issue of **SME finance**, Chief Executive Michael Izza took a delegation of business leaders to meet with Business Secretary **Peter Mandelson**.
- With the Tax Faculty, we have advised MPs on the Finance Bill committee on amendments to this year's **Finance Bill**.



TOP
ICAEW Chief Executive Michael Izza opens the Institute's Policy Summit.

ABOVE
Conservative leader David Cameron addresses a major ICAEW conference on corporate responsibility.

- Conservative Shadow Chancellor **George Osborne** came to Chartered Accountants' Hall to set out his vision for a reformed public sector.
- We put together our **ICAEW Manifesto for the EU Elections**, communicating the Institute's priorities to policymakers in Brussels.
- Liberal Democrat Shadow Chancellor **Vince Cable** shared his thoughts on the 2009 Budget at an ICAEW policy breakfast.
- Michael Izza testified before the **Treasury Select Committee** on fair value accounting and accounting standards, as part of their high-profile inquiry into the banking crisis.

With a general election and a possible change of Government approaching fast, the next year is a vitally important time. Over the coming months we'll be at the UK party conferences in the autumn, preparing the ICAEW Manifesto for the general election, continuing to influence the Finance Bill as it goes through Parliament, and bringing forward policy initiatives on environmental sustainability, the shape of the future economy, fair access to the profession and international accounting standards.

To find out the latest news on the team's work, go to our press and policy pages on the ICAEW website www.icaew.com

SPOTLIGHT ON MALAYSIA

The ICAEW's office in Malaysia organised a tight schedule of events for our immediate past President, David Furst. He visited recently to officiate the opening of first regional international office in South East Asia.

The 2008–2009 ACA graduates from Malaysia and Singapore were recognised on stage at the 2009 Graduation and Annual Dinner co-hosted by the ICAEW and the Malaysia City Group. The dinner was attended by 430 students, graduates and their

parents, alumni members and stakeholders. David also launched the South East Asia Students' Network and Uqba Iftikhar gave a speech on behalf of the network.

David also attended a series of meetings and networking sessions including visits to the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA), Securities Commission, Petronas (National Petroleum) and a campus visit to Sunway University College, tuition provider for the ACA and the Certificate in Finance, Accounting and Business in Malaysia.



ACA graduates with David Furst, Mark Billington and Loh Wei Yuen from the ICAEW and members of the Malaysia City Group



David Furst addressing ACA students from the Case Study class during his visit to Sunway University



David Furst with Puan Nuraini Ismail, Senior General Manager, and Wan Shamila Saidi, Senior General Manager, and QPRT for Petronas during the networking and high tea reception held in David's honour



ACA students, lecturers and Sunway management with David and his delegation which included Dato' Gan Ah Tee, Chairman of the Malaysia City Group



David Furst delivering his speech to the management team of Sunway Group



Ramesh Rajaratnam, Mohd Hasyudeen Yusoff, Chong Sui Wei, Puan Sri Mimi Hanafiah, Ramesh Pillay, Bingley Sim, Tan Sri Hanafiah Hussain and Dato' N K Jasani

ACA STUDENTS IN BUSINESS



It is over 18 years since the ICAEW first authorised training contracts for ACA students outside public practice. This programme to open up new routes to qualification for prospective chartered accountants has expanded from a mere handful of employers to a situation where, today, opportunities exist to acquire the ACA qualification in some of the biggest and best global organisations. In fact, in the recent High Fliers UK Graduate Careers Survey, eight of the top ten employers of choice in the finance sector offer their employees ACA training and of these, five are outside the traditional area of public practice.

Here we look at some of the ACA trainees who are pursuing their qualification outside public practice, around the world.

The first of our profiled trainees is Alex Ofosu-Adjei, who works for Barclays Commercial Bank in Canary Wharf, London. After gaining A-levels in economics, maths and physics, Alex studied economics

at the University of Manchester, followed up with a Masters in Enterprise at Manchester Business School.

'Although I was interested in finance while still at school, I had not decided on accountancy as a route to a financial career until I discovered the Barclays' ACA training scheme as a result of

Opportunities exist to acquire the ACA qualification in some of the biggest and best global organisations.

entering a student competition sponsored by the bank. My career research had already identified the ICAEW as the premier professional body in the field and I quickly realised that this combination of blue chip employer and blue chip qualification would provide an ideal start to my career.

'After two six-month placements in each of the Larger Business Performance Team and the Debt Products Team, I now work as a business analyst within the market risk area of the bank. Here, I am responsible for identifying and evaluating risks within the commercial banking portfolio and formulating strategies to help manage them. The variety of projects that I am required to manage provides continual stimulus, although I will admit that getting my head round some of

the more complicated products can be quite tough. However, I relish the challenge of combining a demanding job with the need to switch into studying mode in the evenings and during study leave, recognising that the prestige of the ACA qualification requires this level of dedication.'

A degree is, however, not a prerequisite for training as an ACA as Jacob Knight's experience demonstrates. 'I originally planned to be a professional footballer after leaving school but, when things did not go to plan, I joined a firm of chartered accountants, subsequently moving to Habitat as a management accountant working in the UK and in France and Germany.

'It was here that I was encouraged to study for the ACA qualification by the then CFO, who was herself a chartered accountant. Although I have now transferred my training contract to T-mobile, I am still in regular contact with my mentor and send her regular texts charting my progress through the examinations – first time passes so far! I am the first ACA trainee at T-Mobile and, in addition to continuing my studies, I undertake a demanding commercial role within the company, structuring and agreeing deals with large organisations including a major high street mobile retailer, a leading supermarket chain and an international device manufacturers while having commercial responsibility for more than 290 T-Mobile stores.

'For me, undertaking the ACA programme at the same time as working full time is a price worth paying. I recognise that an important part of being a finance professional is being able to "make the numbers talk" and the integration of study with work provides me with the ability to do just that.'

Of course, to become a member of the ICAEW, you do not necessarily have to live in the UK as ACA training has been available outside the UK since 1993 when the first



'I relish the challenge of combining a demanding job with the need to switch into studying mode in the evenings and during study leave, recognising that the prestige of the ACA qualification requires this level of dedication.'



FROM TOP
Alex Ofosu-Adjei – Barclays Commercial Bank,
Jacob Knight – T-Mobile and
Suleman Bawany – Emirates NBD

overseas training contract was registered in Cyprus. Today, over 132,000 members live and work in 165 countries around the world.

Suleman Bawany is a Pakistani national who is currently training to become a chartered accountant in Dubai while working for Emirates NBD, which is the largest bank in the Middle East. 'Having completed my A-levels in Karachi, I gained a first class degree in Applied Accounting from Oxford Brookes University.'

'On moving to Dubai, I initially joined a public practice firm working on audits for clients in insurance, manufacturing, real estate and construction. I was, however attracted by the prospect of developing my career in a much larger organisation and, when the opportunity to join the Emirates NBD training scheme for aspiring ACAs came along, I jumped at the chance. My current role is as a Business Performance Analyst which involves extensive interaction with many levels of management

within the various departments of the bank, discussing and understanding their performance in terms of revenues, costs and KPIs. The cosmopolitan business and professional environment in Dubai provides me with an almost unrivalled opportunity to gain exposure to international practice and to develop the confidence to operate within a variety of cultures.

'Balancing work and study, whichever route you choose, demands, of course, considerable time management skills but I remain convinced of the longer term benefits of the ACA qualification which I view as portable both geographically and between sectors.'

Within banking, particularly, the technical requirements and the global dimension demand the high standards of competence that the qualification provides.

The enthusiasm for the increasingly popular non-practice route is not particularly surprising given that the ultimate career destination of most qualified chartered accountants continues to be industry and commerce. Whichever route they choose, newly-qualified ACAs are in no doubt about the wisdom of their choice of qualification – the 2008 survey conducted by *Accountancy Age* noted that more than half the finance directors in the FTSE 100 were members of the ICAEW. This reflects the ever-increasing demand for the highest levels of professional skill, breadth of knowledge and soundness of judgement from those who run the UK's largest companies.

Amazing Career Awaits, indeed!

If you have any colleagues or friends who are thinking about the ACA or would like to know more about how to find a training contract, the ICAEW student support team will be able to provide all the information they need.

STUDENT SUPPORT HELPLINE
T +44 (0)1908 248 040
E studentsupport@icaew.com

STUDENT GROUPS UPDATE

A round-up of student society and student networking events

THE NATIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL (NSC) CHANGES ITS NAME TO ICAEW STUDENT COUNCIL

With the launch of the Russian and Malaysia student networks, the National Student Council proposed that these student networks should be represented by an overarching body. The NSC is now the ICAEW Student Council.

HELP TOWARDS THE MINIBUS APPEAL

The Thames Valley Chartered Accountants' Student Society held a raffle at their recent annual ball and raised £250 for the Bishopswood Special School in Sonning Common, UK. The school offers special needs education within a mainstream setting for pupils aged two to sixteen years, with developmental delay, severe or complex learning difficulties. The donation will be going towards their minibus appeal to acquire a new vehicle so that they can take pupils on days out.

For more information about Bishopswood Special School visit www.bishopswood.oxon.sch.uk



ABOVE RIGHT
David Furst, President of the ICAEW (fourth from the right) with members of the South East Asia Student Network



BELOW RIGHT
A night at the movies. Members of the South East Asia Network enjoy the first event of the newly launched ACA student network



SOUTH EAST ASIA STUDENT NETWORK LAUNCHES IN MALAYSIA

Following the successful launch of the Russian Student Network earlier in 2009, the South East Asia Student Network was formally launched at the ICAEW 2009 Graduation and Annual Dinner held at the Royale Chulan Hotel, Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia on 28 May 2009.

In his speech, student network representative Uqba Jamshaid Iftikhar, who was among the ACA graduates to be recognised that night, encouraged Malaysian ACA students to take advantage of the peer support.

The network members have already organised a few activities including volunteering their services as student ambassadors at career fairs and exhibitions and by endorsing the ACA programme at career talks. They have also had time to let their hair down at a fun night out at the movies.

Visit www.icaew.com/studentgroups for more information about the South East Asia Network

LEFT Dafydd Hopcyn-Kitchener and George Thomas from TVCASS handing over the cheque to the headteacher and PTA chair of Bishopswood Special School

HELP FOR HEROES



Anna Brocklehurst will be raising money for the Help for Heroes charity in August when she competes in her first long distance triathlon. The UK Ironman competition takes place in Bolton, UK on 2 August and consists of a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile cycle and a 26.2 mile run.

Anna, a recently qualified ACA, works for Cooper Parry in Leicester and is Treasurer for LENCASS. She will be raising money for the Help for Heroes charity which provides practical direct support to those servicemen and women wounded in the line of duty in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In a typical week of training, Anna is currently swimming 3km, cycling 150 miles and running 36 miles. 'It has been hard work; I have been training since 5 January with a maximum of two days off a week. I am looking forward to it but am also very nervous. The bike course is quite hilly and I have to complete the triathlon within about 8 hours which I think is going to be quite close'.

If you would like to sponsor Anna or to keep up to date with her training visit <http://www.justgiving.com/annabrocklehurst>



LEICESTERSHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS' STUDENT SOCIETY (LENCASS)

14 August
CASINO NIGHT
The City Rooms, Leicester
For further information contact,
vicky.nicholas@icaew.com

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS' STUDENT SOCIETY OF LONDON (CASL)

Professional Stage Revision Courses
11 August Tax
13 August Business Strategy
18 August Financial Reporting
20 August Financial Management

Advanced Stage Revision Courses
30 September Tax
7 October Financial Reporting

All courses are held at Kaplan Financial, Angel Square, London from 18.00–20.30 and cost £17.50

Career in Business Seminar
Wednesday 23 September 2009,
18.30–21.30
Free event including networking buffet

Just started your training contract?
Keep Friday 16 October free for a fantastic night with your new colleagues and training friends! Stay tuned for more details next month.

If you would like to attend any CASL event please book online at www.icaew.com/events or email Deborah for more information – deborah.hartog@icaew.com

MEET THE NEW CHAIR OF THE ICAEW STUDENT COUNCIL

VITAL met up with James Bulloss, the new chair of the ICAEW Student Council, to find out more about his plans for the year ahead and what he likes to do when he is not at work.

What is your favourite sport?

Until a couple of years ago I used to ski race to a high level having taken part in the European championships on a number of occasions, but I do it purely for recreation now.

I am very much into motorsport. I follow not only popular forms such as F1 and world rally, but also rally cross and ice racing.

What is your favourite holiday destination?

This is a tough one as I have been fortunate to visit many great places. My most recent holiday was a week in Las Vegas earlier this year. Having expected it to be 'chintzy' I was really surprised. It's a great place with loads to do, helicopter flights through the Grand Canyon, great shows, fine dining, the obligatory gigantic gaming halls... the list goes on.

What's on your ipod right now?

There are some obvious staples such as Basement Jaxx and Royksopp, but more recently La Roux and Friendly Fires.

What annoys you the most?

I think it would have to be queuing, especially if it is in motorway traffic.

What do you like doing when you are not in the office?

I enjoy following motor racing, travelling, reading and watching films... all the clichés really.

What is the key objective for the ICAEW Student Council this year?

There are 4 main objectives.

- Assist in the successful launch and expansion of the online student community.
- Try and increase the awareness of local student societies among students.



I would also advise students to attend their local society events as they are a great opportunity to meet different groups of friends outside the office environment.

- Ensure that local societies are represented at national ICAEW meetings.
- As the ICAEW expands around the world there are many countries that have trainees, so it is important that the UK societies can pass on their experience on how to run a successful student community.

What advice would you give to a new trainee ACA?

Not to underestimate the amount of time that needs to be put into preparation for exams. There is always a need to perform across all areas, as there is little point in being a star in the office and not performing in studies as becoming qualified gives you the key to open the door to your career.

I would also advise students to attend their local society events as they are a great opportunity to meet different groups of friends outside the office environment.

Why is it a good idea to get involved with your local student society?

Many people move locations to join their company so it's a great opportunity to meet people in your area who are 'in the same boat'.

Local societies run many great events throughout the year and these require organisation, so getting involved in the running of a society allows you to become more involved with the ICAEW to which we all ultimately aim to be a member of.

What's your involvement with the online student community?

The online student community is another example of how the ICAEW is constantly evolving to ensure it remains relevant in the modern world, while retaining its position as the premier institution for commentary and technical reference for the financial and political community.

The aim of the community is to act as a forum for students around the world to chat, debate and interact among themselves and with the Institute. It has the foundation to act as a long-term platform to enhance students' direct ties between the Institute and its student members.

What's the best thing about training to be an ACA?

Knowing that you will have the premier accounting qualification in the world, that will give you access to many job opportunities, not only in the UK but around the world. Many ACA students work for firms that have a global reach and the opportunity to gain secondments once qualified without question exists.

James Bulloss works for Grant Thornton in Leeds, UK and is a member of the Leeds Chartered Accountants' Student Society (LCASS). You can contact James at james.bulloss@gtuk.com

STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS IS VISIBILITY!

There is nothing quite so comfortable and secure as sitting in the office all day and waiting for business to come in, it's a way of life for many in our profession. After all, it's so much easier than hitting the road in search of new business or cultivating existing clients.

Accountants usually say they are far too busy and that the effort outweighs the rewards. Why bother to hunt, they argue, if plenty of good referrals are coming in? Because in today's challenging world it means you are dependant on third parties to dictate the speed of growth of your client portfolio. Be in command and control early on in your career by showing you are proactive and a rainmaker and your career will blossom very quickly. Most people wait for things to happen – don't you be one of them!

In a world of e-commerce and eroding business loyalties, is it really a good idea for you to simply sit and wait? After all, every day clients drip away. They die, they retire, they sell or merge, they change their allegiances or the business fails. If you want to expand and flourish you need a constant transfusion of new business because this is your life-blood. It doesn't matter at what stage you are in your career, everyone can bring in business... through networking.

Networking is simply building relationships and every relationship we have ever built in our lives has three key steps – know, like and trust. When you attend more business events (internal and external) you get to know more people and when they like you and have need for accounting or financial services you are the portal through which that prospect can

come. In the eyes of the lay person all accountants are the same; people buy people first, the service second and the firm last.

Seek out invitations and see them as a potential business opportunity. Say to yourself: 'Aha, a chance to meet new contacts, to create new openings, gain new knowledge, raise my profile and increase business in the long run.'

Now don't get me wrong, working the room requires the courage of a lion and nerves of steel. If you feel a bit shy and nervous, don't worry. Most people feel exactly the same and only the most accomplished and regular networker will feel at ease.

What's the problem? On all the workshops and training programmes I run, people say the problem is fear – fear of not knowing what to say, fear of saying the wrong thing or fear of meeting people for the first time. But probe a little deeper and their real fear is fear of rejection.

US speaker Zig Ziglar says: 'Fear? False Expectations Appearing Real! How often have you been rejected at a business gathering? When was the last time someone turned their back on you, ignored you or rejected your extended hand? No matter how many times I ask this question, the answer is always NEVER.'

So take a deep breath, approach someone new, introduce yourself and ask for their name. They will mentally hug you for approaching them, as they are probably more nervous than you. Networking is like learning to drive or learning to touch type – it's always a bit uncomfortable at first. But how long does this feeling last? You'll soon feel just as comfortable about



networking as you do behind the wheel of your car or at your word processor.

There's a common theme to driving, typing and networking. Practise, practise, practise and it becomes practice.

If you go through your career and don't go networking or do it badly it probably won't stop you being successful, but when you are an effective and confident networker, I believe, you can't fail to move your career faster than most others.

The author of this article is Will Kintish, leading UK authority on effective and confident networking both offline and online. If you'd like Will to speak at your conference or training workshops, call him on +44 (0)161 773 3727. Visit www.linkedintraining.co.uk and www.kintish.co.uk for further free and valuable information on all aspects of networking.



TOP UP YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF TOP-UP



Since its introduction in 2007 there have been three sittings of the Professional Stage Financial Accounting (FA) Top-Up paper, the results of which have presented some useful lessons. In this article the exam team takes you through the Top-Up syllabus, the style of the exam, the available learning materials and comment on exam performance to date.

THE TOP-UP SYLLABUS

The specification grid for the Top-Up paper, as set out within the full Top-Up syllabus, is as follows:

	%
Preparation of consolidated financial statements	80
Principal differences between IFRS and UK GAAP	20
	100

If you look at the full syllabus, you will see that the preparation of consolidated financial statements includes the preparation of complete consolidated financial statements and the preparation of extracts from those consolidated financial statements. Consolidated financial statements comprise:

- a consolidated statement of

financial position;

- a consolidated income statement;
- a consolidated statement of changes in equity; and
- a consolidated statement of cash flows.

Only the principal differences between IFRS and UK GAAP in respect of single company financial statements are examinable.

THE FORMAT OF THE EXAM

The Top-Up exam is a one hour paper, containing nine objective testing questions (worth 12 marks)

'Neglecting to study any topic within the syllabus could mean throwing away anything from a single objective testing question upwards.'



and two written test questions (worth 28 marks). The written test sections of all past papers to date are available on the student website and are also reproduced at the back of the Top-Up question bank.

One of the written test questions is likely to require you to prepare one of the following: a complete consolidated statement of financial position, a complete consolidated income statement (possibly with a consolidated statement of changes in equity or extracts therefrom) or a complete consolidated statement of cash flows.

The other written test question is likely to include extracts from the consolidated financial statements not tested elsewhere on the paper as well as differences between IFRS and UK GAAP. The objective testing questions will cover all areas of the syllabus.

So, for example, written test question one might require the preparation of a consolidated income statement for 18 marks. The other aspects of consolidation, up to a further 14 marks (making a total of 32 out of the 40 marks), would be tested via written test question two and some of the objective testing questions. So, written question two (which must, in this example, be for 10 marks) might require, say, extracts from a consolidated statement of financial position for six marks, with the other four marks being on differences between IFRS and UK GAAP. This would mean that 24 out of 28 written test marks are on consolidated financial statements. This would leave eight marks on consolidated financial statements to be picked up in the objective testing questions. In this example, this would mean that six out of the nine objective testing questions would be on consolidated financial statements, testing topics not covered in the written test questions. Even in a one hour paper it is possible to achieve a high level of syllabus coverage so that almost

Only the principal differences between IFRS and UK GAAP in respect of single company financial statements are examinable.

all aspects of consolidated financial statements can be tested within a single paper.

As set out above, differences between IFRS and UK GAAP in this example would be tested as four marks within written test question two, plus three of the objective testing questions, coming to a total of eight out of the 40 marks. Again, even within eight marks it is possible to test a high proportion of the examinable differences.

Neglecting to study any topic within the syllabus could mean throwing away anything from a single objective testing question upwards. Remember that for every mark lost in Top-Up you move 2.5 percentage points away from the pass mark of 55%.

INTRODUCTORY LEARNING MATERIALS

You will have been provided with the full FA study manual, even though the whole of the full FA syllabus is not examinable. This is because all of this knowledge is carried forward to the Professional Stage Financial Reporting (FR) paper, and to the Advanced Stage. Guidance has been produced and can be accessed via the ICAEW website, showing, for each chapter of the FA study manual, which sections and questions (if any) are relevant to your Top-Up studies.

Although the guidance includes those sections of each chapter dealing with the examinable differences between IFRS and UK GAAP (which are exactly the same as those examined in the full FA paper) there is also a useful summary setting out all of these differences together in the introduction to the FA study manual (on page xxii). Only those differences first examinable in FA are examinable in the Top-Up paper.

Even though the full FA syllabus is not examinable, because all of this knowledge is deemed to be carried

forward to FR and the Advanced Stage you would be well-advised to also study those areas of the FA material not listed in the guidance. This will also ensure that you have revised the IFRS treatment of items in single company financial statements, which will help you when you come to those parts of the chapters which deal with the differences between IFRS and UK GAAP.

REVISION MATERIAL

While there is no bespoke study manual for Top-Up, there is a bespoke question bank and mock exam, which are used on the revision phase of your course.

The question bank contains only the types of questions which might appear in the Top-Up exam – a number of questions featuring complete consolidated financial statements and a number featuring a mixture of extracts from the consolidated financial statements and requirements covering differences between IFRS and UK GAAP.

EXAMS SAT TO DATE

There has been strong evidence even from the very first Top-Up examination that many candidates have made a deliberate decision to try and pass the Top-Up paper on the basis of their knowledge of consolidated financial statements alone. In other words they have chosen to ignore that part of the syllabus dealing with differences between IFRS and UK GAAP.

Evidence has consisted of poor scores on objective testing questions covering this area and a high number of non-attempts on these parts of written test questions.

This has proven to be a very dangerous tactic particularly in a sitting where the differences part of the paper has been relatively straightforward. If a candidate comes to the paper with no

‘Consolidated financial statements: Ensure that you are able to quickly and accurately produce complete consolidated financial statements or extracts from those financial statements.’

knowledge of the examinable differences between IFRS and UK GAAP he or she is immediately throwing away eight out of 40 marks. In order to then achieve the pass mark of 55% he or she would have to score over 68% on the consolidation part of the paper.

SUCCEEDING AT TOP-UP

The exam team recommends the following action in order to improve your chances of passing the Top-Up paper.

Consolidated financial statements: Ensure that you are able to quickly and accurately produce complete consolidated financial statements or extracts from those financial statements. You need to be equally comfortable with a consolidated statement of financial position, a consolidated income statement, a consolidated statement of changes in equity and a consolidated statement of cash flows.

You should ensure that you practise as many questions as possible,

both written test and objective testing questions – there are a good number of each in both the study manual and the question bank. Do not neglect the consolidated statement of cash flows (where performance has been historically poor). This may mean you have to spend some time revising the technique for preparing a single company statement of cash flows.

Differences between IFRS and UK GAAP: Learn the examinable differences between IFRS and UK GAAP and ensure you can both replicate these differences and can apply that knowledge to simple numbers. Again, ensure you have worked (and understood) all the questions in the material.

IN CONCLUSION

To pass the Top-Up paper you need a thorough understanding of consolidated financial statements, but you cannot afford to rely just on that – you must also ensure you can cope with questions on differences between IFRS and UK GAAP.



Visit the exam resources area of the ICAEW website for more articles from the examiners as well as revision tips, examiners mark plans and past exam papers.

APPLICATION LEVEL TAXATION THE EXAMINERS' PERSPECTIVE

The application level Taxation paper is a technically demanding paper with a broad syllabus. Tax is also an integral part of your studies and this paper will prepare you for the taxation content of the Technical Integration (TI) papers and Case Study.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

- Each paper will have between two and six questions which will be mainly computational but with some written parts. The balance of written and computational requirements will be similar to that in the sample and December 2007 papers. Ethics will continue to be examined in every sitting.
- You need to demonstrate an ability to calculate tax liabilities and that you have an understanding of tax planning strategies.
- The syllabus split of 60% business tax and 40% personal tax allows a wide range of questions to be set in our examinations. Sometimes a paper might have a more corporate bias, while other papers might focus on an owner-managed business. However, all taxes will continue to be examined in each paper, including value added tax (VAT) and stamp taxes.

Do not try to question spot or assume that a topic examined in one sitting will not be examined in the subsequent sitting.

GUIDANCE TO HELP YOU TO PASS THE EXAM

- Requirements will be set to guide you through the stages of a computation. You need to demonstrate that you can cope with the basic tax computations and handle all of the major taxes in the syllabus. However, you will still be expected to analyse unstructured information, where appropriate.
- It is acceptable to write your answers in note form rather than full sentences and you can use standard abbreviations throughout such as VAT, SDLT, AE, BPR, and IHT.
- Workings should be cross referenced back to the main answer. Workings can be placed within each sub-requirement rather than at the end of the exam paper.
- Time management is critical to your success. If you omit entire requirements, you are at risk of failure. Attempt every question within the allocated time.
- Questions can be attempted in any order and therefore candidates could attempt smaller questions or favoured topics first.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The whole of the syllabus from Principles of Taxation is also examinable at application level Taxation. However, at application level your knowledge will be applied to more complex scenarios.

Do not try to question spot or assume that a topic examined in one sitting will not be examined in the subsequent sitting.

Finally, understand that tax is a dynamic subject relevant to both your studies and the real world. Our assessments will continue to challenge your abilities and fuel your enthusiasm for the subject.

Visit the exam resources area of the ICAEW website for more articles from the examiners as well as revision tips, examiners mark plans and past exam papers.

FINANCIAL REPORTING BECAUSE? SO WHAT?

Financial Reporting (FR) is a Professional Stage application (PS-A) examination that requires a high level of technical knowledge and a wide range of professional skills. It builds upon the core concepts from the Accounting (PS-K) module and the skills developed in the Financial Accounting (FA) module. It is essential that you master the knowledge and skills introduced in FA to ensure success in the Financial Reporting module and at Advanced Stage (AS).



What is the aim of this module?

The aim of the module is to enable you to prepare and present extracts from financial statements, including accounting policies, and to conduct financial analysis.

Financial Reporting incorporates the application of accounting standards, the presentation of financial information and financial statement interpretation. It is a conceptual and ethical/judgmental, as well as a technical, module. This differentiates Financial Reporting from Financial Accounting, which is a module where the problems are factually presented and you must present one solution rather than considering alternatives.

You not only need to focus on describing what accounting standards are but you will be required to apply them to scenarios. Additionally, you will need to use standards to solve the same sort of problems that you encounter in the workplace.

Does it use IFRS?

Like all modules in the ACA qualification, International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) are the primary reporting basis. However, you are also expected to have a strong grasp of the differences between IFRS and UK GAAP.

You should review the syllabus carefully. It identifies which IFRS are examinable and at what level of detail. It also provides a comprehensive analysis of the examinable differences between UK GAAP and IFRS.

What is the examination structure?

The examination is two and a half hours in length and will comprise four written test questions. One of the questions will probably be longer than the other three which will be of much the same length.

The examining team has been extensively involved in the preparation of the learning materials. They have ensured that the materials cover the syllabus and that there are plenty of typical exam standard questions available in the revision question bank. Many of these questions were written by the examiners.

The study manual includes skills chapters in addition to technical chapters. These chapters demonstrate the skills and techniques that you should use in approaching the different question types. These chapters were written by the examining team and cover the main question types:

- financial statement analysis questions
- scenario based, open-ended questions
- scenario based, consequential questions.

Good financial reporting requires an explanation of why you are required to do something and not just what you are doing.

Any one of the questions could include requirements focusing on the differences between IFRS and UK GAAP or ethical issues.

What should you do if you are studying this paper?

The examining team recommends that you familiarise yourself with the syllabus, the set text and the learning materials. In particular review the sample paper and previous exam paper questions and answers.

In preparing for this module, you should remember two key things to constantly ask yourself:

1. **Because?** – Advice to clients and colleagues needs to be justified. Good financial reporting requires an explanation of **why** you are required to do something and not just **what** you are doing.

2. **So what?** – Clients and colleagues want to understand the **consequences** of financial reporting. How will it affect the financial statements, user's perception, the profits, debt levels or even management's level of remuneration?

The new learning materials reflect this by using examples and illustrative disclosures.

Do the examiners have any tips?

Don't just concentrate on technical excellence. A range of professional skills are needed to approach the questions. The learning materials develop these skills.

The key to this exam is to keep asking yourself – Because? So what?

Visit the exam resources area of the ICAEW website for more articles from the examiners as well as revision tips, examiners mark plans and past exam papers.

MAKE YOUR MARK CHALLENGE 2009

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY FOR ICAEW STUDENTS AND MEMBERS

The Make Your Mark Challenge is the UK's largest one-day enterprise competition for schools and colleges, and it kick-starts Global Entrepreneurship Week (16–22 November 2009). School students aged 14–19 years work in teams and are given one day to come up with new and innovative business ideas in response to a secret brief launched on Monday 16 November.

The Make Your Mark Challenge runs in individual schools and colleges and feedback from teachers show that students can benefit enormously from external business expertise. Following a successful pilot which took place last year, ICAEW students and members have the opportunity to support the Make Your Mark Challenge at their local school or college and be a part of a global celebration of enterprise during Global Entrepreneurship Week.

You can support schools and colleges in either a facilitation or judging capacity. Make Your Mark and ICAEW strongly believe that this will greatly enhance the quality of the experience for the school students and provide a rewarding experience for all.

Find out more at www.makeyourmarkchallenge.org.uk. For further information on volunteer roles and/or to register your interest please contact Deborah Amara at deborah.amara@icaew.com



The Make Your Mark Challenge is the UK's largest one-day enterprise competition for schools and colleges

When? Monday 16 November 2009
Where? At your school or college
Who's it for? KS4 & KS5 students (14-19 years)
How do I register? Registration opens 1 September at www.makeyourmarkchallenge.org.uk. A full information pack will be available in September.

Don't be a carbon copy, enter the Make Your Mark Challenge and let your enterprising students stand out from the crowd. This one-day activity asks students to generate new and innovative business ideas in response to a secret brief and meets National Curriculum requirements for enterprise education too. Last year over 56,000 young people took part - enter a single class or a whole year group. The sky's the limit!

make Your mark CHALLENGE 2009

www.makeyourmarkchallenge.org.uk
0845 094 0226



OFF TO A FLYING START IN CHINA

Students at the School of Economics and Management, Tsinghua University in China can accelerate their progress towards gaining the ACA qualification after graduation with PwC through the new International Flying Start Programme.

The programme, which was officially launched at a ceremony in June, is a joint initiative between Tsinghua University, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and the ICAEW.

Professor Qian Yingyi, Dean of the School of Economics and Management, Tsinghua University said: 'The qualified students will be allocated specially designed work placements with PwC while studying for their degree, which is recognised as approved technical work experience towards the ACA qualification, a prestigious world-class qualification awarded by the ICAEW.'

If students pass all ACA exams at their first attempt, they will be able to qualify as an ACA within the first year of graduation.

Upon qualification, they will be given a valuable opportunity to participate in a one-year work placement in one of PwC's firms outside mainland China. This is a unique opportunity for the students to experience working in an international environment, as well as being able to learn from experienced PwC professionals abroad.

'Tsinghua University is one of the most prestigious universities in China and PwC is one of the top global employers,' said Susan Festa, ICAEW Head of International Development, Learning & Professional Development. 'We are delighted to be working with these two leading organisations, helping the brightest graduates in China acquire the ACA qualification and pursue an international career.'

Despite the global financial crisis, China remains one of the most promising economies in the world and the demand for experienced accounting professionals is steadily increasing. It is expected that the International Flying Start Programme will support this demand.



For more information about the International Flying Start Programme please contact Joyce Chao on +86 10 8518 8622 or email joyce.chao@icaew.com

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