



Education Committee Paper: Delivery of Professionalism Education

1. IAA Subject Professionalism

The IAA 2013 Education Syllabus has the following items on the subject of professionalism:

Aim

To develop awareness of the meaning of professionalism, the importance of professionalism in the work of an actuary and the professionalism issues that may arise in the course of that work.

Topics

- Characteristics and standards of a profession including the need for:
 - Specialised skill and education
 - Ongoing training and development
 - High quality of advice
 - Exercise of independent judgement
 - Objectivity, integrity and accountability
- Code of conduct
- Discipline process
- Practice standards set by actuarial bodies and other stakeholders
- Considerations for actuaries in international practice
- Regulatory roles of actuaries
- The professional role of the actuary
 - Analysis and resolution of ethical issues
 - Identifying and managing conflicts, misuse of or undue influence on advice
 - Nature of advice
 - The public interest

2. Delivery methods

2.1 There are different delivery methods of professionalism education used by different associations:

- a) professionalism event run by the association around the time of admission as a full member
- b) professionalism event run by the association at the start of student training or at some point in the education process other than the end

- c) individual discussion with a senior member of the association
- d) distance learning course done by individuals
- e) web-based event “webinar”
- f) inclusion of professionalism issues throughout the training
- g) reliance on the professionalism events of other associations
- h) professionalism event run by a group of associations.

2.2 The professionalism event may be included with material covering other non-technical actuarial skills such as business awareness or legal matters. Several associations now offer professionalism training for qualified actuaries as well as those newly qualifying. The focus of this note is the requirement for professionalism as part of the 2013 IAA Education Syllabus and 2013 IAA Education Guidelines.

2.3 The various delivery methods are suitable under different circumstances and can have advantages and disadvantages. These are discussed below.

Professionalism event run by the association around the time of admission as a full member

- suitable for a group of 20-25 students
- is it possible to monitor all students in the group to ensure equal levels of participation and understanding of the significance of the topic?
- case studies can address real life issues. Case studies can also often be written to be practice-area specific
- in associations with large numbers of students the event can be made specialism specific
- efficient use of resources for large associations
- need to ensure consistency of standards between seminar leaders across events and across time
- gives student a chance to come close to the association which may not happen easily in large associations or with large geographical distribution of members
- gives exposure to a number of ideas and views from both students and leaders which is important in a subject where shades of opinion matter.
- allows discussion of ideas before decisions are made
- sets model of discussion of these issues in a future career
- need to specify topics to be covered
- association can set the topics to be covered and can change them as situations develop
- can include exposure to what other professional bodies do.

Professionalism event run by the association at the start of student training or at some point in the education process other than the end

- this is really a subset of the above in terms of delivery approaches
- advantage of looking at professionalism at different stages of a student's experience means that development of ideas can be considered
- if introduced early in the student's career, it reinforces the importance of adherence to high professional standards even before the student assumes an actuarial role. This however is sometimes a disadvantage in that workplace inexperience can limit the level of discussion.

Individual discussion with a senior member of the association

- main advantage is that each student is engaged in the subject and approach to professionalism can be assessed
- need for consistency of standards between senior interviewers
- resource intensive for associations
- only one view is available from student and one from senior member so shades of difference are harder to achieve
- it may be more restrictive for a student to bounce ideas around if there is only one-to-one contact
- sets model of asking advice on these issues in a future career
- need to specify topics to be covered so an overall view from the association is important
- association can set the topics to be covered and can change them as situations develop
- if used it should be well documented
- it might be used in conjunction with delivery methods relying on the professionalism events of other associations or groups of associations to reflect distinctive issues in a particular legislation.

Distance learning course done by individuals

- may be useful where large geographical distances are involved.
- feedback to student is important
- student may lack a real contact to bounce ideas around with
- once set up this may be an efficient use of resources both at student and at senior level
- does it encourage approach of asking for advice in the future on these sorts of issues?

Web-based event

- this may have some of the problems that a distance learning course would have
- real-time direct feedback to students is possible.

Inclusion of professionalism issues throughout the training

- links professionalism issues to subject matter
- professionalism issues can get overlooked while other concepts are developed
- does professionalism come across as a real issue if theory is taught in the rest of the subject?
- how are individual students assessed on grasp of professionalism issues?
- used by some associations where all the training is university based and the association has no direct role

- if there are several universities involved it is difficult to ensure that the coverage at each university is of a similar depth
- it may also be difficult for the association to ask a university to include some developing issues.

Reliance on the professionalism events of other associations

This approach is used by associations who only accept as full members those who are full members of other IAA Full Member associations. Professionalism at qualification stage can be generic but there is a need in all associations to think about updating of professionalism over time and for new legislations.

Professionalism event run by a group of associations

This approach can be useful where the numbers of newly qualifying members are small. There is still a need to ensure that members in any one association keep up to date with the issues in the local conditions and under their own particular legislation.

3. Assessment considerations

- 3.1 Some associations use formal examinations to assess the student's grasp of professionalism issues. This may be a specific paper on professionalism or assessed as part of the final examinations.
- 3.2 Professionalism issues may also be assessed through a case study forming part of the final assessment.
- 3.3 On-line assessment is also used.
- 3.4 For most associations participation in an event is considered sufficient. In a few cases if a participant fails to attend a session or does not participate in the judgment of the event coordinator then the participant may be required to write a brief paper on topics missed.

4. IAA Views

In the assessment of the education systems of different Full Member associations the IAA Education Committee has considered all the approaches above to be appropriate. It is clearly not right to insist on the same approach for all associations whatever their size. However, the IAA would encourage all associations to consider how often an actuary should be encouraged to think about their professionalism skills during their career. It is also important that an actuary is aware of the particular issues in the legislation in which their work is done.