IAA Mortality Working Group - Editorial Committee

Agenda for meeting on Thursday, 3 March 2016

Attendees: Brian Ridsdale (Chair), Morteza Aalabaf (Secretary), Ermanno Pitacco, Eduardo Trigo Martinez, Al Klein, Dieter Gaubatz. Paul Lewis in attendance
Phone-in details circulated earlier

Apologies Bridget Browne

Meeting documents linked here

1. Introduction and apologies

2. Feedback from management group, and proposed response – see below

3. Editorial Committee Brief – Paper 2
   to note and agree
       what the Information Base is for,
       the organisation of the Editorial Committee,
       the editorial process
       criteria for acceptance of new materials
       criteria for the administration system

4. Overview of Information Base quality – Paper 3
   To briefly review the Overview
       Lessons?
       Generic issues?
   to note
       intention to circulate to MWG
       Paul's follow-up
       Intention to start page review process in mid-March

5. Other points – see accompanying memo
   to note
       Developing an effective administration system
       Minor generic changes to the Information Base
       Dieter and Bridget's proposals
       Any other issues?

6. Any other business

7. Date of next meeting

Papers for reference:
Covering email (below)
New version of the Editorial Committee Brief for discussion and approval
Repeat copy of the report on the IB by Paul's colleagues

Brian Ridsdale 26 Feb 2016

………..

Covering email

Dear Editorial Committee   cc Nancy, Paul

Thank you for all your inputs on this subject. I have accumulated your advice into a revised copy of the Editorial Committee Brief. When you read it you will hopefully recognise your input, and I attach a few comments below.

I attach:
Agenda for our meeting of Thursday 3 March 2016
        Attached to it, for ease of access, is a copy of this email
New version of the Editorial Committee Brief for discussion and approval
Repeat copy of the report on the IB by Paul's colleagues (to save searching!)

Developing a manageable editorial process

The analysis by Paul's colleagues shows us how bad some of our IB pages appear. We need to attack on a good number of fronts at once. Sharing the work with willing page owners will help. So anything we can do to make our process effective and efficient will be very welcome.

There was strong support for a proportionate/scaled reviewing approach, and some concern about the reputational risk of putting up a "bad" paper. As a mitigating factor, there's nothing to stop us "taking down" a paper at any time.

There was also a recognition that "we need to define and implement a manageable process: a too complex process does not stimulate collaborations!" I guesstimate that when I'm doing my six-monthly Update for the MWG I takes me around half an hour to search out a new paper, check it for quality and relevance, write a very short summary and locate a version of the paper (if possible) that is open access. But I reckon that if one is responsible for checking a paper that has been *recommended* by a member of the MWG, it should only take around 5 minutes.

I've adopted Ermanno's classification in an appendix to the Brief, and assumed that if a paper comes to us with a recommendation from one of our members then we should only need a thought-through

approval from one member of the Editorial Committee… hopefully a 5-minute job. And I consider that the preparation that Dieter and I do before presenting our half-yearly reports constitutes that initial vetting process for a variety of recent papers, and the some of those papers are good potential material for the IB.

Developing an effective administration system

I am in correspondence with Dieter, Morteza and Nancy on developing an easy-to-use open administration system that will support the EC and our decision-making. The criteria for the system (basically a large spreadsheet) are in section 5 of the Editorial Committee Brief.

Minor generic changes to the Information Base

Dieter, Nancy and I are considering a few issues (mainly arising from the review by Paul's colleagues) and I hope to be able to summarise our conclusions at our meeting on 3 March.

Changes required to individual subject pages

One of the most attractive aspects of the review by Paul's colleagues of our IB is that it is independent and pulls no punches. I think it gives a good indication that we do value good subject pages, and (to a few) that ignoring repeated requests to review their page and include specific papers will no longer be acceptable. I intend to circulate this to all the members of our MWG (but not to IPs), alongside my regular request for pages to be updated in time for the forthcoming MWG meeting.

Paul has offered to do a personal email to each page owner, covering the points made in the review, and I propose to supplement some of those points with some other outstanding issues. Paul also has plans to segment the approach to page owners, depending on the perceived quality of the page… and in some cases to look for a change in page ownership.

As a practical point, some "Page owners" are not in place. Others may be unable for any reason to work on their pages at present. If we really want to move on a page, I propose that a member of the Editorial Committee might be appointed to act as proxy (Subject to the page owner's approval if we have one). We've done this before. I think it might have been Bridget who basically wrote the Projection Techniques page.

Timetable

All of the above can be completed, I believe, in the two weeks following our meeting on 3 March, giving those of our "subject owners*who are keen to get moving (and of course can spare the time at relatively short notice), the chance to make a difference before St Petersburg, and demonstrate to the others that it can be done.

Other points

Dieter wrote: "I just had another thought, and we may already be doing this indirectly. Could we have a section that provides links to the various actuarial associations' website locations where they store papers and conference presentations (not just the general link to the website). Since the website is not

generally available, In the case of the UK and other similar countries, we might include a brief description of the types of material available and instructions on how access might be gained."
This seems very valuable. Personally I often have difficulty in finding conference papers on the IFoA website!
I think the natural place for this is in the subject page "Other sources of information".

Bridget wrote on the subject of the amount of effort required by the EC: "One more radical alternative might be to link in to the broad student body – and by that I mean via academia and via actuarial students in industry: is this something that senior members of the MWG can provide incentives for students/juniors they are working with to produce?
In the past I would have had Honours students who could perform a literature scan to update on a topic – and I guess we can say this is what Paul has just done using his own staff.
Then the MWG member really just needs to sign off on the quality"
I suggest that this is worth considering at a later date. It *might* not actually reduce EC work (if, for example the students keep recommending papers that don't appear to meet our criteria), but it could well encourage interest and usage.

I look forward to any advance inputs, (please circulate to all addressees), and to our discussions on Thursday 3 March

With best wishes

Brian
25 Feb 2016