

Confidence is the key

This year's Winter School was held at Burleigh Court, a purpose-built international management centre, on the campus of Loughborough University. It took place in mid-February, to prepare and motivate students sitting the MCT examinations in April. Many of us arrived on the Sunday night ahead of the five-day workout.

The quality and experience of the lecturers was very good, with many of them having years of experience both in teaching the subjects and setting and marking exams. This was evident by the style and ability of most to convey complex subjects and field difficult questions with ease. There was a 50/50 split in time between revision and exam question practice. This proved very useful, as what initially appeared an impossible question, was shown to be achievable with a bit of thought and confidence. The wide variety of nationalities, backgrounds and experience of the twenty-six students resulted in



many interesting and varied solutions to questions.

The week was well planned with sessions punctuated with coffee and excellent food. The weather was bright and cold, ideal for waking you up after a long lecture with a one-minute blast of cold air outside of the reception and a limited amount of stretching, before returning to CAPM and a discussion on tax. Once the evening lecture sessions were finished the mass reassembled in the bar area, enjoying each other's company and often sharing a joke or interesting story. The extra-cold Guinness proved a popular favorite with many of us, closely followed by copious amounts of ice cold water during the day. The facilities were good, with a few of us using the swimming pool and Jacuzzi before breakfast. Others chose to use the small amount of spare time to catch up on some sleep.

As the week progressed you got into a routine,

with the same group of bodies moving along the corridor, between the lecture room and coffee area and then back again. Many of the students had attended the Saturday revision days, prior to the Winter School, and you got to know each other reasonably well. If you were lucky, you could put a correct name to a face within a day or two. The topics of conversation were often along the lines of 'what time did you go to bed last night?', to which you reply you can't be precise, but it was within a range of time well after ten o'clock. There was a certain level of common suffering with many students finding a particular subject difficult (often the same one) and there was evidence of a certain level of humour amongst us. A minimum level of laughter is often a good sign, when used in a constructive way and helped to keep people focused, attentive and awake.

Key points that came out of the week included:

- there can be many different correct answers to a question, if your logic is sound;
- valuation of companies will often involve a range of possible solutions;
- if you do the work and put in the effort you should pass;
- do not panic if the question or volume of information seems excessive; and
- confidence in your own ability to pass is key.

Thursday night was the formal dinner, with members of the Association joining the students and making some speeches, which were well received. There was plenty of opportunity to speak to experienced treasurers and Association people during and after the meal, which proved popular. There was a tremendous atmosphere and comradeship at this point of the week amongst the students, with some large cigars being smoked in the bar after the meal.

I can honestly say, it was a pleasure to share my week with my fellow students. What had the potential to have been a very boring week, in fact turned out to be an informative, useful and enjoyable time. A special thanks to all at the Association and especially Natalie Blakely who was there with us for the duration to ensure everything went to plan. I can confirm that everyone was extremely tired by the time we departed on Friday evening. I had the cold air in my car on full as I made my way back down the M1, for my 3.5 hour journey home and eventually emerged from the car frozen but alive at the other end. Had I risked the warm air option, it could have been a different story, but then again I had identified, measured and managed the risk.

Good luck to all sitting in April 2001 and for people considering the MCT, I have no hesitation in recommending the Winter School. ■

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