

Back to basics

This section of the magazine will contain advice and support to help students pass their ACT exams. This month, ACT director of education Sarah Davis offers some tips for study success

➤ We all know that distance learning can be lonely. After a long, hard day at the office, studying yield curves and derivatives at home is probably the last thing you want to do. But, unfortunately, there is no way to soften the blow – it's going to be hard work. There are no easy shortcuts with professional qualifications and we recommend that you spend at least seven hours a week on your studies per course, upping that amount closer to the exam period.

But while we can't deny that studying is hard work, the good news is that there is plenty of support available. Going forward, this section of *The Treasurer* will bring you revision guidance, exam advice and 'model answers' all written by an examiner. Help is also on hand on the ACT student website – in addition to your course materials, it contains past exam papers and solutions, a practice question bank, additional study questions, a suggested study timetable, a calculator guide and information on exam dates and revision classes.

Our website also hosts the student forum, which is probably your most valuable source of support as you work your way through the course. Through the forum, you can contact your forum tutor and your course administrator (who are there to answer any questions you have) and interact with other students. Indeed, our experience is that

those students who regularly post questions to the forum, or form links with fellow students through the forum or classes, really benefit from doing so. Don't feel embarrassed about asking any question, no matter how silly you think it seems. You can be sure that there will be other students out there who would also like an answer to that question.

Even if you haven't posted a question yourself, you should still check the forum at least once a week (more regularly near exam time) to see the kinds of issues that are being raised. Remember that passing your course is not a competition. We would like all our students to pass, so you have nothing to lose by posting a question that other students will see. In fact, the opposite is true – there is much to be gained by working collaboratively.

➤ Besides online support, we also offer face-to-face teaching to help you brush up on the topics that are troubling you most. As exam time approaches, you may want to think about signing up for one of our revision classes that take place in the UK, South Africa, Dubai and Hong Kong in September.

Don't underestimate the importance of exam technique when preparing for exams. Poor exam technique, rather than a lack of knowledge or understanding, is one of the main reasons why students fail ACT exams. Plan your time properly

WHY IT'S GOOD TO BE ACT QUALIFIED

Once you've gained an ACT qualification, you will become more marketable. You've demonstrated to your employer that you're serious about a career in treasury and you have a good level of expertise. A lot of employers look for an ACT qualification when hiring. In fact, the AMCT diploma and MCT advanced diploma can be important differentiators during the recruitment process and some employers use ACT qualifications as a key criterion when drawing up an interview shortlist.

BE PREPARED

Studying for an exam is a challenge when you also have to balance that with a demanding job and, potentially, commitments to a partner and children. But some of these strategies can help you achieve your goals:

◆ Have a study plan. You will know the times

of the day or week you study best: for some, this is an hour of study at the office before or after the working day; for others it could mean working during the train journey home.

◆ Keep up the momentum. If you stop studying for two or three weeks, it can be

really hard to knuckle back down again.

◆ You know the old adage – 'practice makes perfect'. Go through past papers in the run-up to the exams. Previous candidates have found this valuable.

◆ Attend revision courses – they are

a very good opportunity to speak to the tutors and other students and to make sure you are as prepared as possible for the exam.

◆ Don't forget to talk to your employer about what you're doing. Most employers will be very supportive of your study and it's in their

interests that you do well, so if you need help from them, ask for it.

◆ Remember to make use of your business network, especially colleagues or people you know who have previously sat the ACT exams. Get them to share their advice and experiences with you.



We want to hear about the topics you struggle with and any tips you can share with other students. So please email Sally Percy at sally.percy@thinkpublishing.co.uk with your suggestions and ideas

and make sure you answer all the questions. You will find some useful hints and tips on exam technique in the exams section of the student website.

If you think you're not ready as the exam date approaches and you've left it too late to defer your exam entry, take a deep breath and sit the exam anyway: it will be good experience of going through the assessment process.

➤ Should the worst come to the worst and you are unsuccessful in your exam, do not give up. Any learning is never wasted and if you stick with it, you are more likely to succeed next time. You can request an overview of your performance in the exam so that you can see where you went wrong, and you will be automatically re-entered for the next exam sitting. Think about what you need to do to pass next time; is it a matter of more effort, or a smarter approach? Do you need some help with key parts of the syllabus or your exam technique? If you are not sure what you need to do, then please ask us for some ideas.

And finally, never forget why you chose to do these exams: to become a professionally qualified treasurer. Put the time in now and you will reap the rewards later. As Woody Allen put it: "Eighty per cent of success in life is turning up." ♡

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KEY DATES

◆ Attend events hosted by the ACT, such as conferences and breakfast briefings. This is a good way to keep up to date with the latest developments and best practice in the treasury world. It will also help to put your studies into context. For more information, see www.treasurers.org/events

- ◆ **13 July**
Letter confirming October 2012 exam entries sent out
- ◆ **3 August**
Date by which you need to have booked your exam venue (if sitting outside London) or requested a deferral of your exam entry
- ◆ **24 August**
Final exam confirmation letter issued