



Chartered
Accountants Ireland
Student Societies

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS HOUSE, PEARSE STREET, DUBLIN 2
info@cassi.ie
www.cassi.ie

CAP 1

2012 PROGRAMME REPORT

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Introduction

This report has been compiled by CASSI by amalgamating submissions from students in all regions, representing the views of students operating both under a training contract and the Elevation programme, following the 2012 CAP 1 Examinations (Summer), held from 29 May to 01 June 2012.

The report outlines their comprehensive and considered responses to all aspects of the CAP 1 programme; from the lectures and tutorials provided to the quality and availability of support materials, the facilities and venues employed and the continuous assessments and exam papers themselves.

Course Delivery

CAP 1 students provided a generous amount of feedback in terms of the planning and delivery of the CAP 1 programme. The work of certain lecturers and their course delivery was commended by the students. It was also noted that, where issues were highlighted, action was taken by CAI to remedy these issues where possible.

However, many students felt that there was a lack of a more practical approach and that more exam questions should be covered in class. It was also felt that more guidance should be provided on a general approach to sitting the exams. Many students were in favour of the continuous assessments, with some students of the view that further assessments should be introduced.

The streaming of lectures was commended by students. It was highlighted that this facility allows students to view lectures they would otherwise not have attended, in particular those held mid-week which may have been missed due to work commitments. However, there was some criticism of the use of online lectures to cover topics not covered in contact lectures. Many felt there was insufficient notice and attention drawn to these. Some felt the topics covered in these would be more suited to a contact lecture.

There were some specific issues highlighted in relation to the planning and delivery of the Tax lectures. Students felt that the structure followed did not make sense. Many students advised that the structure of the textbook was more logical, with many using this exclusively for revision, ignoring the notes provided for lectures.

Availability and Quality of Support Materials

In general, the feedback in this area was very positive. Students praised the availability and general quality of materials. The ability to view online lectures as a study aid was also commended. However, there were a number of recommendations made by students in order to continue to improve the quality of materials.

Students suggested that a question pack for each subject could be prepared and distributed to students at the beginning of the year, with relevant solutions attached.

Students felt there was a gap between the standard of questions covered in lectures and those in the textbook and exam questions. Lecture handouts were not detailed enough. Some lecture notes contained example questions but no solution was provided. Many examples were taken straight from the relevant textbook, referencing the page in the book rather than copying the example was recommended.

Students also commented on errors in material received, particularly in management accounting.

Students suggested that tax papers should be updated to take account of the relevant Finance Act earlier in the year. Updated papers were not made available until approximately one month before the exams.

Exam Venue

Students were generally happy with the exam venues and the conditions there. There were some issues with specific venues.

The location of the Galway venue was criticised as being difficult to find and in a poor location relative to the city and there were heavy traffic conditions. However, the conditions of the venue itself were praised.

In Dublin, there was construction work occurring near the venue which was a distraction for some students. Also, students were unhappy with the seating and desks provided. As well as being small, the desks were quite low.

One student who replied to the survey required special circumstances for the exam and were satisfied with the way their request was dealt with.

In terms of the invigilators, students were happy with this, with 60% stating that they were very satisfied and a further 38.6% stating they were satisfied.

Continuous Assessment - DEBK

Students are in favour of sitting such an assessment. However, the format of the exam was an issue for students.

Students felt that the computerised format of the exam did not take into account workings or the potential for mathematical errors. It is felt that students could be penalised even where they did understand the double entry but made an error.

There were a number of issues with the venues and the requirements. Students were distracted by others coming and going and asking questions re the driver theory test during their examination. Also, there were issues with

the paper provided. Students who requested additional paper had to wait some minutes for this and their first paper was taken from them. Students then found it difficult to check calculations for questions already answered when reviewing their exam before submission.

The delivery of the lectures in this area was praised. However, students felt the level of difficulty of questions covered in lectures and the support materials fell short of the level of difficulty of the actual exam questions.

Continuous Assessment – Management Accounting

Students felt this was a fair paper, which they had been well prepared for. There were some time constraint issues.

Clarification on what was examinable was provided by CAI. Students appreciated this but felt it should have been made clearer from an earlier stage.

Paper 1 – Finance

The overall impression was that this was a fair paper. Students did feel some time constraint issues. Students were also expecting a paper with more quantitative elements and felt there were much more narrative elements than had been expected.

Question 1 - This was seen as the most difficult question by the majority of students. The main issue was with regard to the sales figure provided. Students were unclear as to whether this was a total figure for 5 years or should be taken as an annual figure for each year over years 1 to 5. Students also felt this question was very long. Some students were concerned that this question included a balancing charge/allowance, which is not examinable.

Question 2 – Students felt this was a straightforward question covering an area expected to appear on the paper.

Question 3 - Students felt this to be a fair question.

Question 4 - Students felt this question was fair. However, it was difficult to discern how much analysis was required as regards the ratio analysis part of the question.

Question 5 - This was seen as the least difficult question on the paper.

Question 6 - Students had some difficulty with part (b) of this question. They were unsure what exactly was being asked and how to use the material provided in the correct way.

Question 7 - Students found this question challenging. It was felt that more information was needed to answer this, part (b) in particular.

Paper 2 – Management Accounting

This paper was found to be the most challenging. Students felt there were huge time constraint issues with the paper. As well as the requirements themselves being long and numerous, the narrative of each question was felt to be too long. Students also felt the wording of the requirements was unnecessarily difficult making it hard to ascertain what was being asked.

Question 1 – This was seen as the most difficult question. The content of the question itself was thought to be fair. These issues were due to the amount of calculations required and the amount of time. Students also felt the requirements were not clear.

Question 2 - Students found this question difficult but fair. Some felt the marks for part (a) were low given the calculations required.

Question 3 - The main difficulty with this question related to the phrasing of it. Students felt confused by the wording used in both the narrative and the requirements. Opinions on the area being examined varied, with some finding it fair while others thought it difficult.

Question 4 - Students found this to be the least difficult question. Again, there were issues regarding time constraints and students felt the requirement to calculate the cash budget for a 6 month period was excessive.

Question 5 - Students found this question to be fair.

Question 6 - Students main issue with this question related to the time constraints felt from having completed the rest of the paper.

Paper 3 – Financial Accounting

Students found this to be a fair paper. The main issue related to the change in format in question 1 to 6 questions for 12 marks. It was felt students should have been aware of this before the exam.

Question 1 - As above, the main issue related to the change of format for this question without notification. Students spent time looking for an additional 4 questions that were not on the paper.

Question 2 – Students found note 4 of this to be difficult. It was felt this had not been covered. Also, there was a reference to a figure of 5,000. Students were not sure if this was 5,000 or 5 million. The rest of the question was thought to be fair.

Question 3 - This was seen as the most difficult question on the paper. This was mainly due to the time required for the relevant adjustments.

Question 4 – Views on this question were mixed. Some found it fair while others felt the inclusion of negative goodwill to be unfair as it had not been covered in lectures or in the textbook.

Question 5 – A large percentage of students did not complete this question. Those who did found it a tough question and felt the requirement was confusing.

Question 6 - This was seen as the least difficult question on the paper.

Question 7 - A large percentage of students did not attempt this question. Those who did felt it was fair.

Question 8 - Students found this a fair question.

Paper 4A – Tax (Republic of Ireland)

Overall, students found this a difficult paper.

Question 1 – Students found this question long and difficult. Students were unsure how to deal with the issue of the rental income from the UK property, with most students thinking this was Case V income. CASSI accept that students' perception of this topic is incorrect. Students also had difficulty with the USC and PRSI calculation.

Question 2 - Students views on this question were mixed. Some found it tough as it included an RCT element, but fair. Other students found this a difficult question due to the RCT element.

Question 3 - Students did not find the content of this question difficult but were surprised that the content was totally focused on admin and was narrative only.

Paper 4A – Tax (Northern Ireland)

Students found this a difficult paper. It was felt that the material covered in lectures was of a much more basic nature and did not prepare students for the more complex computations that arose on the paper.

The comments in relation to each of the specific questions also referred to students feeling that the material covered in lectures was not as complex as the issues examined.

Paper 4B – Law (Republic of Ireland)

Overall, students felt this was a fair exam. There was some feeling that the questions asked were too specific and did not reflect the larger topics covered in lectures.

Section A

Question 1 - While the overall view was that this was the most difficult question, the specific feedback provided was that the question was fair. It was felt that the area examined was very specific and students felt there was some repetition in the requirements.

Question 2 - Students found this question to be tough but fair.

Section B

Question 1 - A large number of students did not attempt this question. Those who did found it to be a straightforward question.

Question 2 - The overall question was found fair. However, part (a) (iii) was felt to be very specific and disproportionate to the marks awarded.

Paper 4B – Law (Northern Ireland)

The overall impression was that the paper was fair. However, students were surprised by the lack of questions relating to contract law, given the large amount of focus on this in lectures and course materials.

Unfortunately, no specific feedback was provided on individual questions by those sitting this paper.

Additional Comments

Over 46% of those who responded to the survey advised they found the exams more difficult than they had expected, with a further 24% stating they were much more difficult.

Students felt that the mock exams should be more difficult. It was felt that the standard of questions in the mock exam were far below the standard of the questions in the final papers.

Students strongly recommended the introduction of a rest day. Students sitting both tax and law recommended these be held on separate days, while recognising that these are shorter papers and half subjects.

The length of time allowed for the papers was commented on with students recommending the allowance of 15-20 mins reading time, particularly for management accounting.

Conclusion

In general, the CAP 1 programme for 2012 has been well received by all students. CASSI is grateful to the CAI for extending the invitation to provide this report. We trust the feedback provided will be beneficial and will be taken in the constructive and co-operative spirit intended.

CASSI would like to thank the examinations team and CAI for communicating the availability of the feedback survey to students in the exam venues and via the Student Services Notice board. This assistance is greatly appreciated by CASSI and the regional committees and, together with the continued support of student services, enables CASSI to contact students throughout the year and carry out its role effectively.

Should you require any further elaboration on any of these issues raised, please contact the CASSI Education Officer.