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CAP 1

2013 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 2013 CAP 1 Examinations (Summer), held from 28 to 31 May 2013.

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

The feedback received in relation to course delivery was generally positive, with the work of certain lecturers being commended.

Some students felt that there was a lack of a practical approach to questions, particularly in relation to tax. It was felt by many that the theory side was well covered but there was no application of this.

It was noted that the software used to facilitate viewing of online lectures does not allow students to view lectures via iPad.

A number of students felt that there were too many lectures at the weekend and the course delivery could be better structured to facilitate more evening lectures.

A minority felt that there was some need to condense the material available for the Law examination as it covers more than what is required to deal with what is examined.

Availability and Quality of Support Materials

Students gave a generous amount of feedback in relation to materials.

Overall, views were mixed with some students praising the standard and availability of materials for all subjects. Other students felt that the materials available for subjects like tax, law and finance could be improved on in terms of quality.

There were a large number of students who felt that more past papers should be provided and that past papers should be contained in one zip lock file to make them more accessible.

Some students felt that the solutions available for exam papers could be better. In particular, it was felt that workings should be shown more for figures used in solutions.

A number of students identified that there were errors and typos in solutions and textbooks, particularly in relation to the DEBK toolkit. As in previous years, CASSI would encourage students to provide specific examples of errors and typos so that these can be rectified.

Views in terms of the toolkits and text books were mixed with some students finding that these were not useful while others felt they were.

Continuous Assessment – DEBK

In general, students were very happy with the delivery of the course. However, many felt that the provision of additional practice papers would be of benefit. It was also felt that the fact that no marks are allocated for workings is an unnecessarily unfair element of the DEBK assessment.

The availability of venues was raised as an issue by students in Northern Ireland. It is felt that there are more venues available in the Republic, therefore making it more convenient.

Continuous Assessment – Management Accounting

The vast majority of students felt that this was a well prepared for, fair exam with only a very small number feeling that the lectures were poorly delivered and that the exam was not a fair one.

Paper 1 – Finance

The overall impression was that this was a difficult paper. Many students felt that the lack of a question on WACC was surprising given the amount of time spent on this during lectures. The majority of students felt that they were thrown by the fact the paper did not seem to follow the “trend” of past papers.

Question 1 – This was felt to be the most difficult question by the majority of students. In particular, students felt that the question was time consuming and that the part in relation to interest was unexpected. Also, some students felt that the use of figures and sensitivity analysis was unexpected. It was felt that students had been advised that only the theory element would be examinable.

Question 2 – This was seen as the second most difficult question by the majority of students. The main reason for this was the lack of previous questions which were similar.

Question 3 – Students found this question difficult and time consuming.

Question 4 – Feedback was provided by a small number of students. However, all feedback was positive and it was felt that this was a fair question.

Question 5 – As with question 5, feedback provided was limited. Again, this was felt to be a fair question.

Question 6 – Views on this question were mixed with some finding it the most difficult, while others felt it was the least difficult.

Question 7 – The majority of students felt that this was the least difficult of questions on the paper.

Paper 2 – Management Accounting

In general, students found that this was a fair paper. However, the majority felt that the wording used was ambiguous and led to some unnecessary difficulties.

Question 1 – Opinion on this question was divided with some students feeling it was the most difficult while others felt it was the least difficult. It was felt by the majority that the wording of the question was different to any seen before which made them unsure as to what approach to take.

Question 2 – The majority of students felt this was the most difficult question. In particular, students felt that the wording in relation to the crossing of the ferry and the return journeys was unclear.

Question 3 – The majority of students who attempted this question felt that it was tough but fair.

Question 4 – Overall students felt this was a fair one. Some students again had issues with how the question was phrased.

Question 5 – A small number of students provided feedback on this question. Those who did felt it was fair, but again the wording could have been improved upon.

Question 6 – This question was seen as the least difficult. No further feedback was provided.

Paper 3 – Financial Accounting

Overall, students felt this was a fair paper. However, a minority felt that timing was an issue.

Question 1 – Overall, students felt this question was fair, although time consuming given the marks available.

Question 2 – This was felt to be the most difficult question. In general this was due to the amount of time required to complete this question.

Question 3 – The majority of students felt this was a straightforward, fair question.

Question 4 – This was felt to be a straightforward question by those who attempted it.

Question 5 – Students generally found this to be a fair question.

Question 6 – The majority felt that this question was fair but very time consuming.

Question 7 – Students who attempted this question felt it was fair.

Question 8 – Views on this question were mixed with some feeling it was time consuming while others felt it was fair.

Paper 4A – Tax (Republic of Ireland)

The general impression was that this was a difficult paper. It was felt that question 1 in particular was lengthy, which had a knock on impact for the rest of the paper.

Question 1 – The vast majority of students felt this was the most difficult question. Most students felt that the question was far too long, with a number of adjustments required. Some students also felt that not all issues were clear, for example whether the PRSI had already been deducted. Some students also felt that the adjustment in relation to Professional Services Withholding tax was more in depth than anything covered in lectures. CASSI would like to point out that the Competency Statements states that students should be able to explain the scope of and calculate Professional Services Withholding Tax at an apply level.

Question 2 – In general, students felt this question was difficult. In particular, it was felt that it was not clear whether the €350 charge referred to in part (c) was VAT inclusive or exclusive.

Question 3 – Overall, this was felt to be the least difficult of the questions. Feedback was mixed in terms of the individual parts with some students finding part (a) difficult while others felt it was fair.

Paper 4A – Tax (Northern Ireland)

Overall, view on this paper were mixed with some students feeling that it was fair while others felt it was very difficult.

Question 1 – Students felt this question was the most difficult on the paper. It was felt that this question was far too long, particularly for the amount of marks available.

Question 2 – Students felt this was a fair question. However, some did state that the different format was a little unexpected.

Question 3 – This was felt to be the least difficult question and students found that it was a fair question.

Paper 4B – Law (Republic of Ireland)

Students generally felt that the paper was a fair one. Views were differing in terms of how specific the questions asked were as some felt that the questions were too specific while others felt that the fact the questions were so specific made them easier to answer.

Section A

Question 1 – This was seen as the most difficult of the questions by the majority of students. However, the feedback provided stated that students overall felt it was a fair question.

Question 2 – Overall, students felt this was a fair question.

Section B

Question 1 – This question was felt to be a fair one by the majority of students.

Question 2 – Students felt this was a fair question although quite specific in relation to the powers of an auditor.

Paper 4B – Law (Northern Ireland)

Unfortunately, very little feedback was received in relation to this paper and it is not possible to determine the average student opinions from this.

Additional Comments

Overall, 34% of students felt that the level of difficulty of the exams was as expected, with a further 34% feeling that they were more difficult than expected.

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.

Students also felt that the introduction of a continuous assessment for Finance would be beneficial.

Conclusion

In general, the CAP 1 programme for 2013 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.