

## BOB BULLIVANT

With the CII exams around the corner, do not be put off by the negativity around exams and concentrate on what you need to know to improve your chances of passing with flying colours



# Ways to take the sting out of exams

**A**pril approaches and with it for many an appointment with a Chartered Insurance Institute examiner as they take diploma and advanced diploma subjects. I would like to take this opportunity to dispel some myths about CII exams and to provide what I hope will be some useful pointers to success.

The first point to remember is that you are seeking a professional qualification. The diploma is at first-year degree level and is a test of deep technical knowledge. It is clear therefore that you need to know your stuff and plan a proper approach to study. You will be asked to answer circa 15 short answer questions. This means that a very wide area of the syllabus will be tested and you cannot afford to miss out any area in the hope that it will not be examined.

The advanced diploma is at third-year degree level and as such tests your ability to apply your knowledge in a range of planning scenarios. If you have not passed the appropriate diploma subjects you should ensure that you have the relevant knowledge to apply. The paper will consist of a number of case studies. The best preparation for these papers is practice and the work book which we provide for AF 1-4 gives you the ability to do just this.

As with all professional exams the examination is based on the syllabus and I am always surprised at the number of candidates who never look at it. The syllabus, available on the CII website, will show you where you need to research further either

through reading or the internet.

So I will now deal with a number of myths about the examinations:

- **You do not need to write an essay, points are acceptable.**
- **"It is in the CII's interest to fail me because they then get another fee". It is the exact opposite, it is in the CII's interest to pass you and to increase the number of qualified advisers which is in the general interests of the industry and the consumer.**
- **"I hate calculation questions because I get no marks if I get the answer wrong". This is incorrect. Most of the marks are for knowing how to do the calculation with a small number for the right answer. Calculation questions can and do lead to very high marks for those who know how to carry out the calculation.**
- **"My hand writing is awful and I will be penalised". Again this is incorrect as no penalty is ever awarded for handwriting. In the extreme case that an examiner cannot read your script we will send it to a handwriting expert to have it deciphered.**

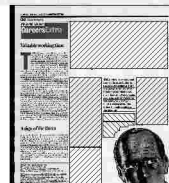
Now is the time to plan how you will spend the remaining study time available to you. If you are to succeed you will need to devote time to this and you will need to be well prepared. The level of the examinations will mean that those who are not well prepared are unlikely to succeed. In the exam room do take time to read the whole paper before starting to write. Do have a time plan and stick to it. And try to allow some time at the end to check your work.

The question paper has gone through a long and strict editing process and you should take note of the following features in the paper:

- **The question will give a precise instruction as to what you are being asked to do:**
  - a) **List means just that – no explanation required so do not waste time.**
  - b) **Explain means just that, tell me more to show you understand.**
  - c) **Recommend means get off the fence and tell me what you would do.**
- **At the side of each question we show the marks available. You should use this to guide the amount you write. Where this shows, for example, two marks you will not gain any more marks by writing two pages telling the examiner everything you know – some candidates do. Equally for ten marks you will need to write more than three or four lines.**
- **Bullet points are sufficient. They cut down the amount you need to write and should enable you to concentrate on the key points that you need to write down to answer the question.**

Good luck. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to be able to pass all of you.

**Bob Bullivant is deputy director general of the CII**





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