

Subject SA2

2021 Study Guide

Introduction

This Study Guide has been created to help you navigate your way through Subject SA2. It contains all the information you will need before starting to study Subject SA2 for the 2021 exams and you may also find it useful to refer to throughout your Subject SA2 journey.

The guide is split into two parts:

- Part 1 contains specific information about Subject SA2
- Part 2 contains general information about the Specialist Advanced subjects.

Please read this Study Guide carefully before reading the Course Notes, even if you have studied for some actuarial exams before. While you may have already read (the majority of) the Part 2 material in previous subjects, the information in Part 1 is unique to this course.

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1.1 Subject SA2 – background and contents

History

The Specialist Advanced subjects were introduced in the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries 2019 Curriculum.

Subject SA2 is Life Insurance.

Predecessors

The Specialist Advanced subjects cover content that was previously in the Specialist Applications subjects. So:

- Subject SA2 continues as Subject SA2.

Exemptions

In order to be eligible for a pass in Subject SA2, you will need:

- to have passed or been granted an exemption from the previous Subject SA2 during the transfer process
- to have met the profession's requirements based on the current curriculum.

See the profession's website for further details:

www.actuaries.org.uk/studying/exam-exemptions

Links to other subjects

- Subject SP2 – Life Insurance Principles: provides the underlying principles upon which this subject is based. It is assumed that students have a good understanding of the general principles covered in Subject SP2, as these can be examined under this subject as well as the specific aspects developed in Subject SA2.
- Subjects SP1 and SA1 – these Health and Care Principles and Advanced subjects cover health and care products such as income protection and critical illness, and related matters. These two products are covered to a limited extent in Subject SA2 because they are relevant products to a life insurance actuary. Questions may get asked in the examination paper for Subject SA2 about matters relating to these products that are not covered specifically in the Core Reading for SA2, in particular applying the concepts covered in SA2 to income protection and critical illness products.
- Subject P2 – Life Insurance UK Practice Module Specialist: the knowledge required to pass Subject P2 is contained in this subject and in an additional appendix including UK specific life insurance material.

Contents

There are six parts to the Subject SA2 course. The parts cover related topics and are broken down into chapters. At the end of each part there is an assignment testing the material from that part.

The following table shows how the parts and chapters relate to each other. The final column shows how the chapters relate to the days of the regular tutorials. This table should help you plan your progress across the study session.

Part	Chapter	Title	No of pages	X Assignment	Tutorial – 3 days
0	0	Introduction to Subject SA2	9		
1	1	Life insurance products (1)	36	X1	1
	2	Life insurance products (2)	36		
	3	Life insurance product bases	32		
	4	General business environment	43		
	5	Legislation	14		
2	6	Policyholder taxation	18	X2	
	7	Life insurance company taxation	36		
	8	Allowing for tax	17		
	9	Regulatory environment	35		
	10	Solvency assessment (1)	34		
	11	Solvency assessment (2)	50		
3	12	Professional standards and guidance	20	X3	2
	13	Treating customers fairly	24		
	14	Capital management	35		
	15	Asset-liability management	22		
4	16	Analysis of surplus	24	X4	
	17	Profit reporting	30		
	18	Embedded value	34		
5	19	Asset shares	29	X5	3
	20	Surplus distribution	46		
	21	Management of with-profits business	34		
	22	Risk management and controls	44		
6	23	Product design and pricing	31	X6	
	24	Problem solving	36		
	25	Glossary	24		

1.2 Subject SA2 – Syllabus and Core Reading

Syllabus

The Syllabus for Subject SA2 is given here. To the right of each objective are the chapter numbers in which the objective is covered in the ActEd course.

Aim

On completion of SA2, students should be able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of:

- the UK life insurance market and other jurisdictions (as described in the Core Reading) – this includes a detailed understanding of the current products sold, the underlying market demand and methods of distribution, as well as the regulatory and fiscal regime
- the principles and techniques of actuarial management and control that are used in practice within the UK life insurance market and other jurisdictions (as described in the Core Reading)
- the commercial issues, economic uncertainty and associated risks that underlie the UK life insurance market and other jurisdictions (as described in the Core Reading).

The life insurance products covered by this subject do not include the full range of health and care insurance products covered by SA1 (Health and Care Advanced).

Competences

In comparison with SP2 'Life Insurance Principles', the assessment under SA2 is looking for candidates to demonstrate a more detailed understanding of the underlying market conditions in the UK and other jurisdictions (as detailed in the Core Reading), as well as the ability to apply actuarial techniques and judgement to more detailed and complex problems.

On successful completion of this subject, a student will be able to:

1. understand the more complex aspects of actuarial practice within life insurance companies
2. apply the principles of actuarial practice to the management of life insurance under complex scenarios
3. compare the approaches by which the principles are applied in practice across different jurisdictions
4. recommend coherent solutions and courses of action in relation to the overall financial management of life insurance companies.

Syllabus topics

- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| 1. | Life insurance products and general business environment | (30%) |
| 2. | Regulatory, legislative and taxation environment | (15%) |
| 3. | Reporting and management of capital and profit | (25%) |
| 4. | General business management | (30%) |

These weightings are indicative of the approximate balance of the assessment of this subject between the main syllabus topics, averaged over a number of examination sessions. As such, there is no weighting assigned to Section 5 of the syllabus 'Problem Solving'.

The weightings also have a correspondence with the amount of learning material underlying each syllabus topic. However, this will also reflect aspects such as:

- the relative complexity of each topic, and hence the amount of explanation and support required for it
- the need to provide thorough foundation understanding on which to build the other objectives
- the extent of prior knowledge which is expected
- the degree to which each topic area is more knowledge or application based.

Detailed syllabus objectives

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------------------|
| 0. | Introduction | |
| 0.1 | Define the principal terms used in life insurance in various jurisdictions. | (Chapter 25) |
| 1. | Life insurance products and general business environment | (30%) |
| 1.1 | Describe the major life insurance products that are offered, beyond the general descriptions provided in SP2. | (Chapters 1 to 3) |
| 1.1.1 | Describe the benefits and other main features of the following products: | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • term assurance, including group life assurance • income protection insurance • critical illness insurance • endowment assurance • universal life • investment bond • individual and group personal pension products • annuities and income drawdown • wraps | |

- variable annuities
- equity release products
- Takaful insurance
- microinsurance.

1.1.2 Describe the main features of the following life insurance product bases:

- conventional with-profits
- accumulating with-profits
- unit-linked
- index-linked.

1.1.3 Assess the purpose and key risks of the above products and bases to the policyholder and the insurer.

1.2 Assess the effect of the general business environment on the management of life insurance business, in terms of: (Chapter 4)

- competition and other new business considerations
- distribution of products
- outsourcing
- corporate finance, including mergers and closed funds.

2. Regulatory, legislative and taxation environment (15%)

2.1 Explain the relevance of legislation to life insurance business, in relation to: (Chapter 5)

- consumer protection
- equality legislation.

2.2 Explain the implications of the taxation of life insurance business for: (Chapters 6 to 8)

- policyholders
- life insurance companies
- unit pricing.

2.3 Describe regulatory frameworks for life insurance companies, including: (Chapter 9)

- objectives of regulators
- supervisory tools, including rulebooks and reporting requirements
- statutory actuarial roles
- transfer of liabilities between companies.

- 2.4 Demonstrate understanding of the over-arching Solvency II regulatory framework. (Chapter 10)
- 2.4.1 Describe the Solvency II framework in terms of:
- background and scope
 - structure
 - Pillar 2 governance requirements
 - Pillar 3 disclosure and reporting requirements
 - group reporting requirements.
- 2.4.2 Assess the implications of a regulatory framework such as Solvency II for business culture and strategy.
- 2.5 Compare regulatory, legislative and taxation environments between different jurisdictions. (Chapter 9)
- 2.6 Demonstrate how the regulatory, legislative and taxation environments affect the way in which life insurance companies carry out their business in practice. (Chapter 9)
- 2.7 Outline the requirements of actuarial standards in relation to actuaries practising in or advising life insurance companies. (Chapter 12)
3. Reporting and management of capital and profit (25%)
- 3.1 Demonstrate an understanding of solvency assessment techniques. (Chapters 10 and 11)
- 3.1.1 Outline the valuation of assets, liabilities and solvency capital requirements under Solvency II.
- 3.1.2 Compare solvency assessment approaches between different jurisdictions.
- 3.2 Demonstrate an understanding of capital management techniques. (Chapters 14 and 15)
- 3.2.1 Explain the different types of capital assessment.
- 3.2.2 Describe the different sources of capital employed within the life industry.
- 3.2.3 Discuss the assessment of ongoing solvency, including practical modelling considerations.
- 3.2.4 Explain the relationship between capital, risk and economic value generation.
- 3.2.5 Describe the capital management techniques used within the life industry.

- 3.2.6 Describe the principles of asset-liability management and the use of derivatives.
- 3.3 Demonstrate an understanding of profit reporting approaches. (Chapters 17 and 18)
- 3.3.1 Outline the main requirements of different accounting standards, including International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and US GAAP, in relation to life insurance business.
- 3.3.2 Compare profit reporting approaches between different jurisdictions.
- 3.3.3 Describe embedded value reporting approaches, including under Solvency II.
- 3.4 Analyse surplus and profits arising over a period. (Chapters 16 and 18)
- 3.4.1 Analyse supervisory surplus arising, including under Solvency II.
- 3.4.2 Analyse the change in embedded value.
- 3.4.3 Identify possible actions that may need to be taken following an analysis of surplus or profit.
4. Business management (30%)
- 4.1 Suggest actions that a life insurance company could take in order to ensure that it is treating its customers fairly. (Chapters 9 and 13)
- 4.2 Demonstrate appropriate risk management strategies and controls that should be exercised by a life insurance company. (Chapter 22)
- 4.2.1 Outline an appropriate risk management framework.
- 4.2.2 Describe the following key risk types in relation to life insurance business:
- credit risk
 - market risk
 - liquidity risk
 - operational risk, including conduct risk, model risk and unit pricing as a source of risk
 - insurance risk, including longevity risk
 - group risk.
- 4.2.3 Propose appropriate risk management strategies and controls for these risk types.
- 4.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the management of with-profits business. (Chapters 19 to 21)

- 4.3.1 Describe the components of an asset share calculation and how they could be determined.
- 4.3.2 Compare different methods of distributing bonuses under the 'additions to benefits' method.
- 4.3.3 Discuss the concept of smoothing.
- 4.3.4 Describe investigations that can be performed in order to inform with-profits business management.
- 4.3.5 Evaluate different bonus distribution approaches.
- 4.3.6 Describe general with-profits management considerations, including:
 - regulatory requirements and policyholder protection
 - management actions
 - managing closed with-profits funds.
- 4.4 Demonstrate an understanding of product design and pricing techniques. (Chapter 23)
 - 4.4.1 Describe the factors to be taken into account when designing life insurance products.
 - 4.4.2 Determine appropriate methods and bases for pricing such products.
- 5. Solving problems
 - 5.1 Develop coherent proposals (or a range of proposals) and recommendations in relation to complex hypothetical scenarios, reflecting overall management of life insurance companies. (Chapters 0 and 24)
 - 5.1.1 Analyse complex problems, demonstrating an understanding of the syllabus, including the following factors:
 - profitability, capital management, risk, regulation and customer demand.
 - 5.1.2 Assess the implications, relevance and interaction of such factors, integrating the results into a coherent whole.
 - 5.1.3 Evaluate the results critically in a wider context, drawing appropriate conclusions.
 - 5.1.4 Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of suggested proposals and recommendations, taking into account different perspectives.
 - 5.1.5 Demonstrate an understanding of any limitations and elements of uncertainty inherent in the proposals or recommendations made.

Core Reading

The Subject SA2 Course Notes include the Core Reading in full, integrated throughout the course.

Further reading

The exam will be based on the relevant Syllabus and Core Reading and the ActEd course material will be the main source of tuition for students.

However, some students may find it useful to obtain a different viewpoint on a particular topic covered in Subject SA2. A list of further reading for Subject SA2 has been prepared by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries and can be found on their website. This list is not exhaustive and other useful material may be available. Further details are given in the chapter Introduction to Subject SA2.

1.3 Subject SA2 – summary of ActEd products

The following products are available for Subject SA2:

- Course Notes
- X Assignments – six 100-mark tests (you are allowed 3¼ hours to complete these)
- Series X Marking
- Online classrooms – over 40 tutorial units
- Flashcards
- ASET (2014-17 papers) – four years of exam papers, *ie* eight sittings, covering the period April 2014 to September 2017
- ASET (2019-20 papers) – two years of exam papers, *ie* four sittings, covering the period April 2019 to September 2020
- Mock Exam – one 100-mark test
- Additional Mock Pack (AMP) – two additional 100-mark tests
- Mock Exam Marking
- Marking Vouchers.

Products are generally available in both paper and eBook format. Visit www.ActEd.co.uk for full details about available eBooks, software requirements and restrictions.

The following tutorials are typically available for Subject SA2:

- Regular Tutorials (three days)
- Block Tutorials (three days).

Full details are set out in our *Tuition Bulletin*, which is available on our website at www.ActEd.co.uk.

1.4 Subject SA2 – skills and assessment

Exam skills

Exam question skill levels

In the Specialist Advanced subjects, the approximate split of assessment across the three skill types is:

- Knowledge – 20%
- Application – 50%
- Higher Order skills – 30%.

Assessment

The Specialist Advanced examinations are in the form of 3¼-hour examinations.

1.5 Subject SA2 – frequently asked questions

Q: *What should I do if I discover an error in the course?*

A: If you find an error in the course, please check our website at:

www.ActEd.co.uk/paper_corrections.html

to see if the correction has already been dealt with. Otherwise please send details via email to **SA2@bpp.com**.

Q: *Who should I send feedback to?*

A: We are always happy to receive feedback from students, particularly details concerning any errors, contradictions or unclear statements in the courses.

If you have any comments on this course in general, please email to **SA2@bpp.com**.

If you have any comments or concerns about the Syllabus or Core Reading, these can be passed on to the profession via ActEd. Alternatively, you can send them directly to the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries' Examination Team by email to **education.services@actuaries.org.uk**.

2.1 Before you start

When studying for the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries' exams, you will need:

- a copy of the **Formulae and Tables for Examinations of the Faculty of Actuaries and the Institute of Actuaries, 2nd Edition (2002)** – these are referred to simply as the *Tables*
- an 'authorised' **scientific calculator** – you will find the list of permitted calculators on the profession's website. Please check the list carefully, since it is reviewed each year.

These are both available from the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries' eShop. Please visit www.actuaries.org.uk.

2.2 Core study material

This section explains the role of the Syllabus, Core Reading and supplementary ActEd text. It also gives guidance on how to use these materials most effectively in order to pass the exam.

Some of the information below is also contained in the introduction to the Core Reading produced by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries.

Syllabus

The Syllabus for Subject SA2 has been produced by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries. The relevant individual syllabus objectives are included at the start of each course chapter and a complete copy of the Syllabus is included in Section 2.2 of this Study Guide. We recommend that you use the Syllabus as an important part of your study.

Core Reading

The Core Reading has been produced by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries. The purpose of the Core Reading is to assist in ensuring that tutors, students and examiners have clear shared appreciation of the requirements of the Syllabus for the qualification examinations for Fellowship of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries.

The Core Reading supports coverage of the Syllabus in helping to ensure that both depth and breadth are re-enforced. It is therefore important that students have a good understanding of the concepts covered by the Core Reading.

In examinations, students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts in the Core Reading; this will be based on the legislation, professional guidance *etc* that are in force when the Core Reading is published, *ie* on 31 May in the year preceding the examinations.

Therefore the exams in April and September 2021 will be based on the Syllabus and Core Reading as at 31 May 2020. We recommend that you always use the up-to-date Core Reading to prepare for the exams.

Examiners will have this Core Reading when setting the papers. In preparing for examinations, students are recommended to work through past examination questions and will find additional tuition helpful. The Core Reading will be updated each year to reflect changes in the Syllabus, to reflect current practice, and in the interest of clarity.

Accreditation

The Institute and Faculty of Actuaries would like to thank the numerous people who have helped in the development of the material contained in this Core Reading.

ActEd text

Core Reading deals with each syllabus objective and covers what is needed to pass the exam. However, the tuition material that has been written by ActEd enhances it by giving examples and further explanation of key points. Here is an excerpt from some ActEd Course Notes to show you how to identify Core Reading and the ActEd material. **Core Reading is shown in this bold font.**

In the example given above, the index *will* fall if the actual share price goes below the theoretical ex-rights share price. Again, this is consistent with what would happen to an underlying portfolio.

After allowing for chain-linking, **the formula for the investment index then becomes:**

$$I(t) = \frac{\sum_i N_{i,t} P_{i,t}}{B(t)}$$

where **$N_{i,t}$ is the number of shares issued for the i th constituent at time t ;**

$B(t)$ is the base value, or divisor, at time t .

The diagram consists of two rectangular boxes on the right side of the text. The top box contains the text 'This is ActEd text' and has an arrow pointing to the phrase 'the formula for the investment index then becomes:' in the text above. The bottom box contains the text 'This is Core Reading' and has two arrows: one pointing to the bolded text 'where $N_{i,t}$ is the number of shares issued for the i th constituent at time t ;' and another pointing to the bolded text ' $B(t)$ is the base value, or divisor, at time t .'

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Legal action will be taken if these terms are infringed. In addition, we may seek to take disciplinary action through the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries or through your employer.

These conditions remain in force after you have finished using the course.

UK Practice Modules

Some students (primarily those who anticipate working in the UK in a reserved role) who take an SA subject exam will also be taking the online UK Practice Module exam. (As not every student will be taking the UK Practice Module, this course does not refer to it other than in this Study Guide.)

The exam consists of generic and practice-area-specific multiple-choice questions.

The required reading for the practice-area-specific part of the module comprises the full SA subject Core Reading, together with an appendix that covers additional UK-specific aspects of practice that are not fully covered in the SA subject Core Reading.

Additional Core Reading has been produced by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries for the generic part.

ActEd has been asked by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries to sell the Core Reading, including the UK-specific appendix, which covers each part of the module.

More general information about the UK Practice Modules can be found at:

www.actuaries.org.uk/students/pages/uk-practice-modules

2.3 ActEd study support

This section gives a description of the products offered by ActEd.

Successful students tend to undertake three main study activities:

1. *Learning* – initial study and understanding of subject material
2. *Revision* – learning subject material and preparing to tackle exam-style questions
3. *Rehearsal* – answering exam-style questions, culminating in answering questions at exam speed without notes.

Different approaches suit different people. For example, you may like to revise material gradually over the months running up to the exams or you may do your revision in a shorter period just before the exams. Also, these three activities will almost certainly overlap.

We offer a flexible range of products to suit you and let you control your own learning and exam preparation. The following table shows the products that we produce. Not all products are available for all subjects.

LEARNING	LEARNING & REVISION	REVISION	REVISION & REHEARSAL	REHEARSAL
Course Notes	X Assignments Combined Materials Pack (CMP) X Assignment Marking Tutorials Online Classroom	Flashcards	ASET	Mock Exam Additional Mock Pack (AMP) Mock Marking

The products and services are described in more detail below.

‘Learning’ products

Course Notes

The Course Notes will help you develop the basic knowledge and understanding of principles needed to pass the exam. They incorporate the complete Core Reading and include full explanation of all the syllabus objectives, with worked examples and questions (including some past exam questions) to test your understanding.

Each chapter includes:

- the relevant syllabus objectives
- a chapter summary
- practice questions with full solutions.

‘Learning & revision’ products

X Assignments

The Series X Assignments are written assessments that cover the material in each part of the course in turn. They can be used to develop and test your understanding of the material.

Combined Materials Pack (CMP)

The Combined Materials Pack (CMP) comprises the Course Notes and the Series X Assignments.

CMP Upgrade

The purpose of the CMP Upgrade is to enable you to amend last year’s study material to make it suitable for study for this year.

Wherever possible, it lists the changes to the syllabus objectives, Core Reading and the ActEd material since last year that might realistically affect your chance of success in the exam. It is produced so that you can manually amend your notes. The upgrade includes replacement pages and additional pages where appropriate.

However, if a large number of changes have been made to the Course Notes and X Assignments, it is not practical to produce a full upgrade, and the upgrade will only *outline* the most significant changes. In this case, we recommend that you purchase a replacement CMP (printed copy or eBook) or Course Notes at a significantly reduced price.

The CMP Upgrade can be downloaded free of charge on our website at **www.ActEd.co.uk**.

A separate upgrade for eBooks is not produced but a significant discount is available for retakers wishing to re-purchase the latest eBook.

X Assignment Marking

We are happy to mark your attempts at the X assignments. Marking is not included with the Assignments or the CMP and you need to order it separately. You should submit your script as an attachment to an email, in the format detailed in your assignment instructions. You will be able to download your marker's feedback via a secure link.

Don't underestimate the benefits of doing and submitting assignments:

- Question practice during this phase of your study gives an early focus on the end goal of answering exam-style questions.
- You're incentivised to keep up with your study plan and get a regular, realistic assessment of your progress.
- Objective, personalised feedback from a high quality marker will highlight areas on which to work and help with exam technique.

In a recent study, we found that students who attempt more than half the assignments have significantly higher pass rates.

There are two different types of marking product: Series Marking and Marking Vouchers.

Series Marking

Series Marking applies to a specified subject, session and student. If you purchase Series Marking, you will **not** be able to defer the marking to a future exam sitting or transfer it to a different subject or student.

We typically provide full solutions with the Series X Assignments. However, if you order Series Marking at the same time as you order the Series X Assignments, you can choose whether or not to receive a copy of the solutions in advance. If you choose not to receive them with the study material, you will be able to download the solutions via a secure link when your marked script is returned (or following the final deadline date if you do not submit a script).

If you are having your attempts at the assignments marked by ActEd, you should submit your scripts regularly throughout the session, in accordance with the schedule of recommended dates set out on our website at www.ActEd.co.uk. This will help you to pace your study throughout the session and leave an adequate amount of time for revision and question practice.

The recommended submission dates are realistic targets for the majority of students. Your scripts will be returned more quickly if you submit them well before the final deadline dates.

Any script submitted *after* the relevant final deadline date will not be marked. It is your responsibility to ensure that we receive scripts in good time.

Marking Vouchers

Marking Vouchers give the holder the right to submit a script for marking at any time, irrespective of the individual assignment deadlines, study session, subject or person.

Marking Vouchers can be used for any assignment. They are valid for four years from the date of purchase and can be refunded at any time up to the expiry date.

Although you may submit your script with a Marking Voucher at any time, you will need to adhere to the explicit Marking Voucher deadline dates to ensure that your script is returned before the date of the exam. The deadline dates are provided on our website at **www.ActEd.co.uk**.

Tutorials

Our tutorials are specifically designed to develop the knowledge that you will acquire from the course material into the higher-level understanding that is needed to pass the exam.

We run a range of different tutorials including face-to-face tutorials at various locations, and Live Online tutorials. Full details are set out in our *Tuition Bulletin*, which is available on our website at **www.ActEd.co.uk**.

Regular and Block Tutorials

In preparation for these tutorials, we expect you to have read the relevant part(s) of the Course Notes before attending the tutorial so that the group can spend time on exam questions and discussion to develop understanding rather than basic bookwork.

You can choose **one** of the following types of tutorial:

- **Regular Tutorials** spread over the session
- a **Block Tutorial** held two to eight weeks before the exam.

Online Classroom

The Online Classroom acts as either a valuable add-on or a great alternative to a face-to-face or Live Online tutorial.

At the heart of the Online Classroom in each subject is a comprehensive, easily-searched collection of tutorial units. These are a mix of:

- teaching units, helping you to really get to grips with the course material, and
- guided questions, enabling you to learn the most efficient ways to answer questions and avoid common exam pitfalls.

The best way to discover the Online Classroom is to see it in action. You can watch a sample of the Online Classroom tutorial units on our website at **www.ActEd.co.uk**.

‘Revision’ products

Flashcards

For most subjects, there is **a lot of material** to revise. Finding a way to fit revision into your routine as painlessly as possible has got to be a good strategy. Flashcards are an inexpensive option that can provide a massive boost. They can also provide a variation in activities during a study day, and so help you to maintain concentration and effectiveness.

Flashcards are a set of A6-sized cards that cover the key points of the subject that most students want to commit to memory. Each flashcard has questions on one side and the answers on the reverse. We recommend that you use the cards actively and test yourself as you go.

The following questions and comments might help you to decide if flashcards are suitable for you:

- Do you have a regular train or bus journey?
Flashcards are ideal for regular bursts of revision on the move.
- Do you want to fit more study into your routine?
Flashcards are a good option for 'dead time', eg using flashcards on your phone or sticking them on the wall in your study.
- Do you find yourself cramming for exams (even if that's not your original plan)?
Flashcards are an extremely efficient way to do your pre-exam memorising.

If you are retaking a subject, then you might consider using flashcards if you didn't use them on a previous attempt.

'Revision & rehearsal' products

ActEd Solutions with Exam Technique (ASET)

The ActEd Solutions with Exam Technique (ASET) contains our solutions to a number of past exam papers, plus comment and explanation. In particular, it highlights how questions might have been analysed and interpreted so as to produce a good solution with a wide range of relevant points. This will be valuable in approaching questions in subsequent examinations.

'Rehearsal' products

Mock Exam

The Mock Exam is a 100-mark mock exam paper that provides a realistic test of your exam readiness.

It is based on the Mock Exam from last year but it has been updated to reflect any changes to the Syllabus and Core Reading.

Additional Mock Pack (AMP)

The Additional Mock Pack (AMP) consists of two further 100-mark mock exam papers – Mock Exam 2 and Mock Exam 3. This is ideal if you are retaking and have already sat the Mock Exam, or if you just want some extra question practice.

Mock Marking

We are happy to mark your attempts at the mock exams. The same general principles apply as for the X Assignment Marking. In particular:

- Mock Exam Marking applies to a specified subject, session and student
- Marking Vouchers can be used for each mock exam paper. Marking vouchers have to be used for marking the AMP mocks and can be used for marking the Mock Exam.

Recall that:

- marking is not included with the products themselves and you need to order it separately
- you should submit your script via email in the format detailed in the mock exam instructions
- you will be able to download the feedback on your marked script via a secure link.

2.4 Study skills and assessment

The Subject SA exams

The SA subjects demand a very different study approach to that of the other subjects.

There is only one paper in each of the SA Subject exams, consisting of up to four questions. Although you still need to know the factual information you have covered in the Course Notes, the paper will predominantly be a test of higher level skills rather than a lengthy test of detailed factual knowledge. These higher level skills are:

- analysis
- synthesis
- critical judgement
- communication.

In order to become adept at these skills, more is required of you over and above simply reading the Course Notes and practising some questions.

There is likely to be less bookwork in the SA Subject exam than you have been used to in the SP Subject exams. More thinking and planning will be required in the exam room, which is difficult when you are under time pressure. You need to realise this and do something about it *before* you enter the exam room.

A greater understanding is needed of the material being covered, beyond what you read in the Course Notes. This means you should be prepared to read around the subject and be aware of current topics within the field of the subject.

You will need a good knowledge of how the course links together. In particular, you should be ready to discuss 'big' topics, such as risk, capital and return. In addition, you need to be able to assimilate efficiently all the necessary parts of both the subject SA and equivalent subject SP course, in order to prove you understand the subject fully. You will also need to employ your communication skills learned in Subject CP3.

Study skills

Overall study plan

We suggest that you develop a realistic study plan, building in time for relaxation and allowing some time for contingencies. Be aware of busy times at work, when you may not be able to take as much study leave as you would like. Once you have set your plan, be determined to stick to it. You don't have to be too prescriptive at this stage about what precisely you do on each study day. The main thing is to be clear that you will cover all the important activities in an appropriate manner and leave plenty of time for revision and question practice.

Aim to manage your study so as to allow plenty of time for the concepts you meet in this course to 'bed down' in your mind. Most successful students will probably aim to complete the course at least six weeks before the exam, thereby leaving a sufficient amount of time for revision. By finishing the course as quickly as possible, you will have a much clearer view of the *big picture*. It will also allow you to structure your revision so that you can concentrate on the important and difficult areas of the course.

You can also try looking at our discussion forum, which can be accessed at www.ActEd.co.uk/forums (or use the link from our home page at www.ActEd.co.uk). There are some good suggestions from students on how to study.

Study sessions

Only do activities that will increase your chance of passing. Try to avoid including activities for the sake of it and don't spend time reviewing material that you already understand. You will only improve your chances of passing the exam by getting on top of the material that you currently find difficult.

Ideally, each study session should have a specific purpose and be based on a specific task, *eg 'Finish reading Chapter 3 and attempt Practice Questions 3.4, 3.7 and 3.12'*, as opposed to a specific amount of time, *eg 'Three hours studying the material in Chapter 3'*.

Try to study somewhere quiet and free from distractions (*eg a library or a desk at home dedicated to study*). Find out when you operate at your peak, and endeavour to study at those times of the day. This might be between *8am* and *10am* or could be in the evening. Take short breaks during your study to remain focused – it's definitely time for a short break if you find that your brain is tired and that your concentration has started to drift from the information in front of you.

Order of study

We suggest that you work through each of the chapters in turn. To get the maximum benefit from each chapter you should proceed in the following order:

1. Read the syllabus objectives. These are set out in the box at the start of each chapter.
2. Read the Chapter Summary at the end of each chapter. This will give you a useful overview of the material that you are about to study and help you to appreciate the context of the ideas that you meet.
3. Study the Course Notes in detail, annotating them and possibly making your own notes. Try the self-assessment questions as you come to them. As you study, pay particular attention to the listing of the syllabus objectives and to the Core Reading.
4. Read the Chapter Summary again carefully. If there are any ideas that you can't remember covering in the Course Notes, read the relevant section of the notes again to refresh your memory.
5. Attempt (at least some of) the Practice Questions that appear at the end of the chapter.

It's a fact that people are more likely to remember something if they review it several times. So, do look over the chapters you have studied so far from time to time. It is useful to re-read the Chapter Summaries or to try the Practice Questions again a few days after reading the chapter itself. It's a good idea to annotate the questions with details of when you attempted each one. This makes it easier to ensure that you try all of the questions as part of your revision without repeating any that you got right first time.

Once you've read the relevant part of the notes and tried a selection of questions from the Practice Questions (and attended a tutorial, if appropriate) you should attempt the corresponding assignment. If you submit your assignment for marking, spend some time looking through it carefully when it is returned. It can seem a bit depressing to analyse the errors you made, but you will increase your chances of passing the exam by learning from your mistakes. The markers will try their best to provide practical comments to help you to improve.

To be really prepared for the exam, you should not only know and understand the Core Reading but also be aware of what the examiners will expect. Your revision programme should include plenty of question practice so that you are aware of the typical style, content and marking structure of exam questions. You should attempt as many past exam questions as you can.

Active study

Here are some techniques that may help you to study actively.

1. Don't believe everything you read. Good students tend to question everything that they read. They will ask 'why, how, what for, when?' when confronted with a new concept, and they will apply their own judgement. This contrasts with those who unquestioningly believe what they are told, learn it thoroughly, and reproduce it (unquestioningly?) in response to exam questions.
2. Another useful technique as you read the Course Notes is to think of possible questions that the examiners could ask. This will help you to understand the examiners' point of view and should mean that there are fewer nasty surprises in the exam room. Use the Syllabus to help you make up questions.
3. Annotate your notes with your own ideas and questions. This will make you study more actively and will help when you come to review and revise the material. Do not simply copy out the notes without thinking about the issues.
4. As you study each chapter, condense the *key points* (not whole chunks of text) on to a double side of A4 or less. This is essential as otherwise, when you come to revision, you will end up having to re-read the whole course again, and there won't be time.
5. Try to use memory aids, such as mind maps and acronyms, to help remember the material when you come back to it later.
6. Attempt the questions in the notes as you work through the course. Write down your answer before you refer to the solution.

7. Attempt other questions and assignments on a similar basis, *ie* write down your answer before looking at the solution provided. Attempting the assignments under exam conditions has some particular benefits:
 - It forces you to think and act in a way that is similar to how you will behave in the exam.
 - When you have your assignments marked it is *much* more useful if the marker's comments can show you how to improve your performance under exam conditions than your performance when you have access to the notes and are under no time pressure.
 - The knowledge that you are going to do an assignment under exam conditions and then submit it (however good or bad) for marking can act as a powerful incentive to make you study each part as well as possible.
 - It is also quicker than trying to write perfect answers.
8. Sit a mock exam four to six weeks before the real exam to identify your weaknesses and work to improve them. You could use a mock exam written by ActEd or a past exam paper.

You can find further information on how to study in the profession's Student Handbook, which you can download from their website at:

www.actuaries.org.uk/studying

Revision and exam skills

Revision skills

You will have sat many exams before and will have mastered the exam and revision techniques that suit you. However it is important to note that due to the high volume of work involved in Subject SA2, it is not possible to leave all your revision to the last minute. Students who prepare well in advance have a better chance of passing the exam on the first sitting.

We recommend that you prepare for the exam by practising a large number of exam-style questions under exam conditions. This will:

- help you to develop the necessary knowledge and understanding of the key principles described in the Core Reading
- highlight exactly which are the key principles that crop up time and time again in many different contexts and questions
- help you to practise the specific skills that you will need to pass the exam.

There are many sources of exam-style questions. You can use past exam papers, the Practice Questions at the end of each chapter (which include many past exam questions), assignments, mock exams and ASET.

Exam question skill levels

Exam questions are not designed to be of similar difficulty. The Institute and Faculty of Actuaries specifies different skill levels at which questions may be set.

Questions may be set at any skill level:

- Knowledge – demonstration of a detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic
- Application – demonstration of an ability to apply the principles underlying the topic within a given context
- Higher Order – demonstration of an ability to perform deeper analysis and assessment of situations. This includes the ability to develop proposals and recommendations utilising actuarial judgement, *ie* taking into account different points of view, comparing and contrasting situations, clearly communicating any limitations and elements of uncertainty in the approach.

Command verbs

The Institute and Faculty of Actuaries use command verbs (such as ‘Define’, ‘Discuss’ and ‘Explain’) to help students to identify what the question requires. The profession has produced a document, ‘Command verbs used in the Associate and Fellowship examinations’, to help students to understand what each command verb is asking them to do.

It also gives the following advice:

- The use of a specific command verb within a syllabus objective does not indicate that this is the only form of question which can be asked on the topic covered by that objective.
- The examiners may ask a question on any syllabus topic using any of the agreed command verbs, as are defined in the document.

You can find the relevant document on the profession’s website at:

www.actuaries.org.uk/studying/prepare-your-exams

Past exam papers

You can download some past exam papers and Examiners’ Reports from the profession’s website at **www.actuaries.org.uk**. However, please be aware that the majority of these exam papers are for the pre-2019 syllabus and so not all questions will be relevant.

The examination

IMPORTANT NOTE: The following information was correct at the time of printing, however it is important to keep up-to-date with any changes. See the profession’s website for the latest guidance.

For the written exams the examination room will be equipped with:

- the question paper
- an answer booklet
- rough paper
- a copy of the *Tables*.

Remember to take with you:

- black pens
- an authorised scientific calculator – please refer to www.actuaries.org.uk for the latest advice.

2.5 Queries and feedback

Questions and queries

From time to time you may come across something in the study material that is unclear to you. The easiest way to solve such problems is often through discussion with friends, colleagues and peers – they will probably have had similar experiences whilst studying. If there's no-one at work to talk to then use our discussion forum at www.ActEd.co.uk/forums (or use the link from our home page at www.ActEd.co.uk).

Our online forum is dedicated to actuarial students so that you can get help from fellow students on any aspect of your studies from technical issues to study advice. You could also use it to get ideas for revision or for further reading around the subject that you are studying. ActEd tutors will visit the site from time to time to ensure that you are not being led astray and we also post other frequently asked questions from students on the forum as they arise.

If you are still stuck, then you can send queries by email to the relevant subject email address (see Section 2.5), but we recommend that you try the forum first. We will endeavour to contact you as soon as possible after receiving your query but you should be aware that it may take some time to reply to queries, particularly when tutors are away from the office running tutorials. At the busiest teaching times of year, it may take us more than a week to get back to you.

If you have many queries on the course material, you should raise them at a tutorial or book a personal tuition session with an ActEd tutor. Information about personal tuition is set out in our current brochure. Please email ActEd@bpp.com for more details.

Feedback

If you find an error in the course, please check the corrections page of our website (www.ActEd.co.uk/paper_corrections.html) to see if the correction has already been dealt with. Otherwise please send details via email to the relevant subject email address (see Section 2.5).

Each year our tutors work hard to improve the quality of the study material and to ensure that the courses are as clear as possible and free from errors. We are always happy to receive feedback from students, particularly details concerning any errors, contradictions or unclear statements in the courses. If you have any comments on this course please email them to the relevant subject email address (see Section 2.5).

Our tutors also work with the profession to suggest developments and improvements to the Syllabus and Core Reading. If you have any comments or concerns about the Syllabus or Core Reading, these can be passed on via ActEd. Alternatively, you can send them directly to the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries' Examination Team by email to education.services@actuaries.org.uk.