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Advanced Diploma Syllabus for 2016 FAQs

This page contains details of some of the frequently asked questions concerning the Advanced Diploma in Retirement Provision Qualification. They are grouped under several headings:

- Registering for the examinations
- Studying for the examinations (study material packages)
- Assessment
- Credits and examinations in the new structure
- Entering the examinations
- Examination results

The answer to questions not found here can usually be found elsewhere on the website. However, if you still cannot find an answer to your question contact the Qualifications Department at pmiqualifications@pensions-pmi.org.uk

Registering for the examinations

1. I am Affiliate member (or non member) can I attempt a core/specialist unit in 2016?

Yes and you will become a Student member by purchasing a core/specialist unit package. At that time you will need to pay the relevant Student member annual subscription fee. You will need to maintain Student membership in order to sit further examinations. We would recommend that the core units are completed prior to the specialist units.

2. I passed the Retirement Provision Certificate (RPC) in 2015 (or earlier) can I attempt a core/specialist unit in 2016?

Yes. As a result of attempting RPC it is likely you are a student member (and if you passed it you may be a Certificate member) and as long as you maintain your membership you will be able to purchase a core/specialist unit package and attempt an examination. We would recommend that the core units are completed prior to the specialist units.

3. I passed the Certificate in Pensions Automatic Enrolment (CPAE) in 2015 (or earlier) can I attempt a core unit in 2016?

Yes. As a result of attempting CPAE it is likely you became an Affiliate member (unless you were already a member and if you passed it you may be a Certificate member). In order to attempt a core/specialist unit you must become a student member (see Q1) or maintain your Certificate membership and you will be able to purchase a core unit package.

4. Is there a registration or election fee to become a Student member?

No. If you purchase a core or specialist unit package you will become a Student member and the election fee is therefore included in the package fee. At that time you will need to pay the relevant Student member annual subscription fee.

5. Should I sit the core units before the specialist units?

Yes we would recommend completing the core units first as they underpin the specialist units. This is only a recommendation and we appreciate that individual circumstances (eg prior experience/study plans/career development) may impact on the choice of units.

6. How do I apply?

In order to study for the Advanced Diploma it is necessary to be a member of PMI at either Student, Certificate or Diploma member grade. You can become a Student Member by registering for one of the exam units.

7. How do I re-register?

If you were previously a member but allowed your membership to lapse it is possible to re-register and recommence your studies. You will need to register for one of the exam units to continue.

8. How much does it cost to apply or re-register as a member?

The fees for study material packages and annual subscription can be found on the website.

9. When is the closing date for applying or re-registration?

In order to sit Advanced Diploma examinations registration must be completed by the closing deadline for each examination series. These dates can be found on the website.

10. Can I/do I have to claim accreditation of prior learning (APL) when I register?

Yes it is possible to claim any APL credits to which you may be eligible when you register, however it is not compulsory to do so and they can be claimed at a later date. However, we would recommend claiming any credits as soon as possible to ensure that the issue is not overlooked. Further details can be found on the [APL](#) page of our website. A separate form is available for APL applications.

11. How long will it take me to complete the qualification?

This varies considerably. Most candidates take two or three examinations each year and therefore most complete after four or five years.

12. How much will the whole qualification cost?

This will depend on your choice of study options and the speed at which you complete the examinations. However, once you have become a Member you will need to pay a membership subscription each year and for each unit you sit you will need to purchase a study material package. The current fees can be found on the website.

13. Do I have to start the qualification from scratch if I am re-registering?

No, those who re-register effectively pick up their Membership as it was left when they lapsed. Therefore, they would receive credits for any previous passes, subject only to any applicable transitional arrangements applying from any previous syllabuses. Details of the transitional arrangements can be found on the website.

Study Material Packages

14. How many study hours am I expected to do per year per unit?

We do not make any recommendations for study hours because we have found that it varies enormously between individuals depending on their level of prior familiarity with the material and between units. However, an individual undertaking a distance learning course of four assignments, each of which requires approximately three hours, could expect to, at the very least, spend 12-15 hours preparation/reading time for each one. In addition there is a mock examination in each course.

Of course, some assignments may take longer, especially those on new and/or 'difficult' areas, and some less time to complete. Therefore, it would take at least 75-80 hours to complete the course and on top of this must be added revision time. You should note that typing assignments into the web based system will impact timings and that many of the examinations are hand written.

15. What is a core/specialist unit package?

For 2016 we have revised the way we make access to the examinations available. In order to simplify the booking process we now include the study material and examination entry in a single package

with a single fee. This package also includes all updates for study material if they are required. This approach is also consistent with that for new qualifications we have launched in recent years.

16. What study material is in a core unit package?

The core unit package includes a study manual and access to the online distance learning programme where students can attempt examination style questions and obtain feedback from a PMI tutor.

17. What study material is in a specialist unit package?

The specialist unit package is similar to the core unit package (see Q7) but also includes a Communication manual that covers additional information that is relevant for specialist unit examination purposes.

18. Why has the price of a core/specialist unit package increased?

The package is a new concept and it combines study material and examination entry fees as well as any election fee that may be applicable. It also includes any updates to study material that may be required (eg in the event of an examination sitting in the following year). See Q11 below.

19. If I do not sit or pass the core/specialist unit examination in April can I sit or resit in October?

Yes the study material and syllabus will be the same and there is a resit examination entry fee and form available for this purpose. You must ensure you have an active membership when applying to resit an examination. As not all specialist units are offered twice yearly it may not be possible in the case of some specialist units. See the examination timetable for details.

20. If I do not sit or pass the core unit examination in April or in October can I sit or resit the following year?

Yes there is a resit examination entry fee and form available for this purpose. You will automatically receive access to updates study materials at the point of application. You will need to pay your membership subscription when it falls due.

21. Does the price of a core/specialist unit package include the annual membership subscription fee?

No. Subscription fees will need to be paid separately when they fall due at the rate appropriate to your membership grade.

22. I attempted the Retirement Provision Certificate in 2015, do I need to purchase a study material package again if I wish to sit the examination in 2016?

No. If you sat the examination in 2015 and are still a current member, you will need to pay the examination re-sit fee. For access to the study material, please contact the Qualifications Department and access to the current study material will be provided.

23. I attempted an Advanced Diploma module in 2015, if I am attempting the equivalent unit 2016, do I need to purchase the study material package for the equivalent unit in 2016?

No. If you are resitting a unit in 2016 that is the equivalent of one you sat in 2015, you would need to pay the examination re-site fee only. The study material can be accessed via the Diploma in Retirement Provision page link to the study website.

A list of 2016 units and the equivalent module in the previous syllabus can be found below:

Core Unit 1A Understanding Retirement Provision (UK)	201 - Providing for Retirement
Core Unit 1B Foundation in International Employee Benefits	207 - International 1: Foundation in International Employee Benefits
Core Unit 2 Regulation of Retirement Provision	202 - Legal Issues Relating to UK Pension Arrangements
Core Unit 3 Running a Workplace Pension	302 - Management, Risk and Governance

Scheme	
Core Unit 4 Financing and Investing for Retirement Provision	205 - Investment
Defined Benefit	203 - Defined Benefit Schemes
Defined Contribution	204 - Defined Contribution Arrangements
Reward and Retirement Provision	301 - Employee Compensation and Benefits
Taxation, Retail Investment and Pensions	206 - Retail Investment and Personal Taxation
Retail Advice and Regulation	306 - Retail Investment Advice and Regulation
Managing International Employee Benefits	305 - International - 2: Managing International Employee Benefits
Professionalism and Governance	304 - Explaining Pension and Benefit Matters

Assessment

24. How will the core units be assessed?

The core units will be assessed by a combination of multiple choice and short answer type questions as part of a two hour examination. This approach is most appropriate for the content of these units. Further details and sample questions will be published later in the year.

25. How will the specialist units be assessed?

The specialist units will each be assessed by a three hour written examination.

Credits and examination in the new structure

26. What is happening to the credit system?

From 2016 the Advanced Diploma will not be credit based. The completion criteria will be a defined combination of units. These will include the core units, a selection of specialist options and finally the Professionalism and Governance Unit.

27. I am an Advanced Diploma student and I have been (or will be) awarded credits for PMI qualifications Qualification in Pensions Administration (QPA)/Diploma in Pension Calculations (DPC)/Certificate in Pension Calculations (CPC)/Certificate in Pensions Administration (CPA)/Diploma in Pensions Administration (DPA) when do I need to complete the Advanced Diploma?

As the Advanced Diploma will no longer be credit based transitional arrangements are in place for those who have begun Advanced Diploma studies (or do so before 31 August 2017 – see next question). The deadline for completion (or the expiry of these arrangements) is the end of 2021. This deadline has been extended from 2019 following feedback on the practicalities of the implementation of the transitional arrangements for those with credits from PMI vocational qualifications: CPC/CPA/DPA/DPC/QPA. These arrangements are covered on pages 9 and 10 of the Consultation response document. We recommend individuals in this category contact the qualifications department for an individual transition statement.

28. I am working towards the PMI qualification CPC/CPA/DPA when do I need to register as a Student of the Advanced Diploma in order to be able to make use of any credits?

For those who have and wish to apply credits for these PMI qualifications this deadline has been extended to 31 August 2017. This deadline will also apply for those who have completed non current PMI qualifications, ie QPA and DPC. This deadline has been extended following feedback on the practicalities of the implementation of the transitional arrangements for those with credits from PMI vocational qualifications: CPC/CPA/DPA/DPC/QPA.

29. How do the passes that I have obtained so far translate to the new syllabus?

The exact transitional arrangements are covered on page 9 of the Consultation response document.

30. Will I have to sit more examinations as a result of the changes?

No. The exact transitional arrangements are covered on page 9 of the Consultation response document. These arrangements have been designed to take into account relevant content and to ensure no one has to sit more examinations than they would otherwise

31. What is happening to the Diploma in Retirement Provision (DRP)/Diploma in Employee Benefits and Retirement Saving (DEBRS)/Diploma in Regulated Retirement Advice (DRRA)/Diploma in International Employee Benefits (DipIEB)?

These diplomas will remain post 2016 and will be comprised of broadly similar units from the Advanced Diploma. Consequently there will be some differences to the constituent units and assessment methods.

32. What is happening to the Retirement Provision Certificate (RPC)?

The RPC will remain a standalone qualification offering an entry level overview of retirement provision in the UK. It will no longer be a requirement for the Advanced Diploma. Those who pass the RPC (or who have passed) will be entitled to apply for Certificate level membership of PMI.

33. What is the new Professionalism and Governance Unit?

This unit will be a compulsory requirement of the Advanced Diploma. In addition to matters relating to governance it will include an element to prepare students for a career in pensions and emphasise the importance of professionalism. The examination will reflect this split. Further details and sample questions will be published later in the year.

34. Do I have to sit the core units before the specialist options?

No. However, we would recommend that the core units are completed first.

35. Do I have to sit the Professionalism and Governance Unit last?

No but we would expect it to be sat once the core and specialist options have been completed.

Entering/withdrawing from the examinations

36. What is the date and time of the examination?

The examination timetable can be found on the [Dates, fees and forms](#) page. This information will also be contained in the admission permit which is sent about ten days before the examination.

37. What centres are there?

A list of examination centres can be found [here](#)

38. What do I need to do to enter the examinations?

Examination entry is included in the study material package. When completing the application form you can select a centre for the unit you wish to sit.

39. When is the deadline for entering for examinations?

The closing dates for the April examinations are in the previous January and for October in the preceding August. The exact dates for each session can be found in the examination regulations, on the [Dates, fees and forms](#) page and in PMI News.

40. I've missed the deadline – can I still enter for the examination?

No. The examination entry closing date is strictly enforced. We must receive all examination entries before the closing date. Any received after this date cannot be accepted.

41. I have entered an examination. Can I change centre/ my choice of unit/ defer to the next sitting?

It is only possible to change your choice of unit or examination centre before the relevant closing date. Examination entries cannot be transferred from one session to another.

42. I can't sit the examination because I'm ill/ too busy etc. – can I get a refund? If yes, what do I need to do?

A withdrawal from examinations must be confirmed in writing and sent to the PMI. You may be entitled to a refund depending on how long before the examinations and the reasons why you withdraw. If you withdraw on medical grounds a doctor's certificate must be provided.

Sitting the examinations

43. I haven't got my admission permit/ I don't know where the examination is taking place.

Your admission permit and information about the examination centre, some important instructions for candidates and your candidate number will be sent to you by e-mail approximately two weeks before the exam takes place. If you still do not have this information ten days before, please contact the Qualification Department (pmiqualifications@pensions-pmi.org.uk) and it can be re-issued. You will not be able to sit the examination without a permit.

44. Is there a map of the centre available?

If a map is available it will be sent with the admission permit. If you are unsure of the centre location you are advised to locate it and visit it prior to the day of the examination. There are many internet map sites which can help with locating venues.

45. I've just got married and all my documentation is in my maiden name (apart from my admission permit). What can I do?

In this case you would need to bring suitable photo identification along with evidence of your change of name.

46. I may require special arrangements when I sit the examination, is this possible and what should I do?

If you will require special arrangements to enable you to sit the examination you must inform us in writing as soon as possible to see if any special arrangements need to be/can be made. If necessary/applicable you should outline your circumstances and the arrangements you may need. It is helpful if you could submit details of any similar arrangements that have been made for you by other examining bodies and also, where appropriate, relevant medical assessments.

Examination results

47. When are the examination results released?

Results for April examinations are issued in July and for October examinations in December. The exact dates are published in advance on the website and in PMI News. Result notifications are sent directly to candidates by first class post on the day of issue.

48. Are the examination results available on the website?

The pass list will be available from 9am on the website on the day of publication, which is usually the next working day after the results have been issued.

49. Can I phone up and ask for my examination result?

It is possible to call Qualifications from 9am on the day of publication. However, the staff will only be able to confirm whether or not that a name is on the pass list.

50. What is my exact mark?

It is not our policy to publish an individual candidate's mark.

51. Can I change the address the result notification is sent to?

Yes. Inform the Qualifications Department in writing indicating whether the address is a temporary or permanent change by email - pmiqualifications@pensions-pmi.org.uk

52. What's the pass mark?

It is not our policy to publish the pass marks for examinations.

53. When are the examiners' reports available?

The examiners' report on the April examinations is published in September and the examiner's report on the October examinations is published in February.

They are both published on the website [here](#)

54. What do the S and T grades mean?

There is only one grade of pass (Grade P), but there are two grades of failure Grades S and T). These grades are explained more fully on the [Examinations](#) page.

55. Can you tell me if my employee/friend has passed/failed an examination?

It is not our policy to communicate a candidate's result to anyone else. The only information of this sort that is published is the pass list. The pass list confirms the candidate names and module passed for each session.

56. I have failed an examination. Can I have some feedback on where I am going wrong?

Please contact the Qualifications Department to discuss the options available.