

At the Examination Centre

By Ronnie Smith

1 Introduction

- 1.1 ACCA is the world's largest professional accounting examining body. The change in timetable introduced at the December 2001 session, from five days to eight, is designed to ensure that virtually all ACCA's 100,000 candidates are sitting in their exam centres at around the same time, no matter where in the world they happen to be. To be frank, this development is aimed at making it very difficult for students to cheat by using global time differences to their advantage. Candidates in the East will no longer be sitting the same ACCA papers up to 8 or 9 hours before their colleagues in the West.
- 1.2 The change also means that you may sit only one paper each day, unlike the previous possibility of having exams in the morning and the afternoon. ACCA hopes that this more evenly distributed examination schedule will benefit both candidates and their employers
- 1.3 In spite of these fundamental changes to ACCA's examinations, the regulations and procedures governing your behaviour inside the examination centre remain largely unchanged. I think it would be useful to review the actual sitting of your exams at this stage, just before the all-important event.

2 Good Practice

2.1 Time

- 2.1.1 Always give yourself plenty of time to get to the exam centre or, to put it another way, do not leave yourself with so little time before your exam that you have to panic and rush to get to there.
- 2.1.2 Before the exams begin, make sure that you know where the exam centre is (check your docket or look at the ACCA website) and that you are confident of the route you will take to get there. Travel the route on a busy week day to test the time it will take to get to the centre. Make sure that you are not going to get lost or be stuck in traffic and make sure that you leave your home or office in plenty of time.
- 2.1.3 You will feel much calmer and more confident if you can be at your exam centre with enough time to find your desk within the hall, ask any questions you may have of the Invigilators, fill your details on your Candidate Registration Sheet (CRS) and the front cover of your script booklet, check that you have the correct question paper in front of you and generally settle down and be ready for the Supervisor to tell you to begin.

2.1.4 The alternative is a breathless, sweaty panic from which you may not recover during the exam, ruining months of hard preparation.

2.2 Identification

2.2.1 A vital function of all examining bodies is to ensure that only properly enrolled students are allowed to sit their exams. That is why ACCA issues you with student registration cards and it is also part of the reason why they send you an Examination Attendance Docket. The Docket tells you which desk to sit at, confirms the papers (including stream) you will be taking and provides you with the full address of your exam centre. It also proves to the Exam Centre Supervisor that you have properly entered to sit each exam and are being allowed to do so by ACCA.

2.2.2 If for some reason your Docket does not arrive in time, please do not panic. Take your passport, ID card, driving licence or any other form of photographic identification with you to the examination centre. Go immediately to the Supervisor and show him/her your ID. He/she will check your details on the master attendance sheet and issue you with a replacement Docket to use during your exams.

2.2.3 Your identification will be checked by the Invigilators during the course of each exam so leave your Docket and ID on your desk to allow the Invigilator to quickly and quietly remove the docket for checking. It will be returned to your desk except for your last exam of the session. Then it will be kept by the Supervisor and returned to ACCA to be used as proof of your attendance.

2.3 No Early Leaving

2.3.1 As a result of the change to the exam timetable and to be consistent with the reasons for that change, ACCA has decided that no candidate may leave the hall before the end of each exam. So even if you finish your paper early or find the exam too difficult from the start, you must stay in your seat till the end. No matter how long you have to wait, ACCA will expect you to sit quietly and not to disturb your fellow candidates. As a student member of ACCA, you will still be under ACCA's exam regulations and if you behave in a manner which is regarded as disruptive you will be disciplined accordingly.

2.3.2 If you complete your paper early, you can use the time to check over your script and make sure that everything is absolutely correct.

2.3.3 If you thought the paper was too difficult at the beginning, this 'extra' time will allow you to calm down, gather your thoughts and perhaps realise that your initial panic was misplaced and that there are bits of the paper which you can do. Use the time to read through the questions more thoroughly, you never know...

2.4 The Supervisor and Invigilators

- 2.4.1 These people are either appointed directly by ACCA or by a body such as the British Council, acting as an agent for ACCA. Their fundamental task is to ensure that you get to sit your exams in the fairest circumstances possible, within ACCA's exam regulations. They are there to help you and to make sure that you obey ACCA's examination rules and regulations.
- 2.4.2 Please help the Supervisor by listening to his/her instructions at the beginning and end of each exam. If you are unsure about anything or have questions, just ask the Supervisor through the Invigilation team. Don't sit in your seat afraid to ask as an unanswered question may disrupt your exam performance.
- 2.4.3 The Invigilators will patrol the passageways between candidates' desks to ensure that everyone is observing the regulations. They will check your Docket to make sure everything is in order. They will also answer your questions, hand out extra paper when you need it and collect your script at the end of each exam.
- 2.4.4 If you have a problem at any time during the exam, report it to an Invigilator. If you are generally unhappy about an aspect of the exam, report it to the Supervisor at the end of the exam and ask that it be recorded in the Supervisor's report to ACCA. It may be that your performance has been affected by something and it will help if the Supervisor and ACCA are aware of that at an early stage (see item 2.5).

2.5 How ACCA deals with problems

- 2.5.1 If something has happened during an exam at a particular location, which might have affected candidates' performance, ACCA will ensure that the circumstances are taken into account during script marking.
- 2.5.2 For example, if noise from building work outside your exam hall has disrupted your concentration you should make the Supervisor aware of it as soon as possible. If the Supervisor cannot put a stop to the noise, he will make ACCA aware of the problem and include details of the incident in his report which is returned to ACCA.
- 2.5.3 ACCA will contact the Examiner to ensure that candidates suffering disruption at their centres do not lose marks as a result.
- 2.5.4 It is therefore important that you tell the Supervisor if anything is disturbing you.
- 2.5.5 After the exams and before the results are issued you have a limited period of time to let ACCA know, in writing, of anything which might have had a negative effect on your exam performance. This could be ill health, domestic circumstances or local disruption.

- 2.5.6 Please note, ACCA will not consider any of these issues if you write to them after the results have been published.

- 2.6 Other points
 - 2.6.1 You can't take food to your desk but you can take water etc.
 - 2.6.2 ACCA does not allow programmable calculators with a printing function and your calculator may be checked by Invigilators.
 - 2.6.3 Do not put lots of lucky charms on your desk, leave plenty of room to work in what is a very confined space.
 - 2.6.4 Make sure that you have spare pens, pencils and correction fluid.
 - 2.6.5 You are not allowed to talk or move about during the exam.
 - 2.6.6 You must let an Invigilator know if you want to go to the toilet and you will be accompanied by him/her to ensure that you do not have an opportunity to cheat.
 - 2.6.7 Stop writing when the Supervisor tells you at the end of the exam, you may be disciplined if you do not follow instructions.
 - 2.6.8 Try and stay as relaxed as possible, mistakes are always caused by worry and anxiety. You've completed your preparation, now is the time to perform.

3 Summary

3.1 Here are the basics again.

- Give yourself plenty of time each day to get to your exam centre.
- Plan your route to the centre.
- Don't forget your Docket/ID.
- Make sure you have all your equipment.
- Make sure you sit at the correct desk each day.
- Make sure that you have the correct exam paper each day.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions if you are not happy.
- Listen to and follow the Supervisor's instructions.
- Take time to read each of the exam questions carefully.
- Concentrate, do not panic – use the full period of the exam to do all you can.

4 Good Luck!