


World-class learning

In 2015, CIMA became the first major accountancy body to move from paper-based to computer-based testing. Managing Director, Andrew Harding FCMA, CGMA talks to Gary Gates, Senior Vice President – Global Business at Pearson VUE, CIMA's learning partner, about the new system.

 View the video in full online at cimaglobal.com

Andrew: I can remember doing my MBA 12 years ago and suddenly realising in my first exam that this is the first time I'd tried writing for three hours in about 20 years. I thought my arm was going to drop off! The reality of the workplace these days is that it's screen, it's keyboard, it's a different communication experience, so a move from paper to computer-based feels very, very natural.

Gary: People are now used to using computers in their daily lives. We're seeing people come to us not only in the financial space but also IT, healthcare and university admissions who want to do exams on computers because that's the medium they're used to.

We deliver exams via our centrally hosted technology platform to test centres globally, resulting in a consistent experience. So it doesn't matter whether you're doing a test in Manchester, Beijing or in Sydney, it's the same testing experience. As our measurement scientists like to say, these are fair, valid and reliable tests.

Andrew: When we introduced the 2015 syllabus the idea was to support employability and to produce management accountants who were competent in the workplace. So the case study elements are really important to us, and we worked with you to produce something as close to a work environment as we could – almost a simulation. How did that progress?

Gary: We worked for over 12 months with the CIMA subject matter experts and our measurement scientists. We have produced an assessment which brings a number of learning elements together. It's designed to be as near as possible to real life, in terms of what happens for real accountants when they're asked real questions. So for example, rather than writing an essay, candidates could find themselves writing an email with the same content but in a role-relevant setting. They've got to think about their audience, how they present information and how they bring different learnings together.

It all goes back to why we do this in the first place. It's about turning learners into earners, it's for people to get jobs, and I think we're seeing a pull from employers who want people with relevant skills.

'We want to be innovative in our testing so that we produce management accountants who are competent in the workplace.'

ANDREW HARDING FCMA, CGMA
Managing Director, CIMA

Andrew: Now this has been going for a year, how are you seeing others react?

Gary: CIMA's led the way in some of the things that you've done. A lot of other industries are now saying that not only is it about computer-based testing, it's about being more innovative around the questions you ask and the competencies that you're measuring through that testing experience.

'We're seeing a pull from employers who want people with relevant skills.'

GARY GATES
Senior Vice President, Global Business, Pearson VUE

ANDREW HARDING FCMA, CGMA
Managing Director, CIMA