

## ACCA Student Engage 2009

**Length: 31 mins 48 secs**

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**SM:** [00:01] Hello, I'm Stuart Maister and welcome to ACCA's *student engage* event, live from London. Over the next half an hour or so, we'll be answering your questions on effective study and exam preparation and also on the BSc Degree available to ACCA students as part of ACCA's partnership with Oxford Brookes University. We've received over 500 questions already and obviously, we can't answer all of these, but we've picked out the most frequently asked questions submitted by students and will aim to answer as many as we can. However, there is still time to put forward your questions and join in the discussion during this programme, by clicking on the link below and pressing submit. Well, joining me to answer these questions are ACCA's Head of Qualifications, Catherine Edwards. Hi, Catherine and Geoff Holmberg, who's the Programme Director of the BSc Honours Degree in Applied Accounting at Oxford Brookes University.

**GH:** Hello, Stuart.

**SM:** [00:53] Hi, Geoff, how are you doing? Now, below us, don't forget, there are links to relevant pages on ACCA's website, which you may find useful and you are encouraged to make good use of these. But let's get going with the very first question and the first part of our programme is dedicated to questions about exam preparation, study methods, and the latest study resources which exist and there have been, as you might expect, a lot of questions in this area. Now, Ezekiel Yusuf from Nigeria wants to know, Catherine, which study method would you recommend?

**CE:** [01:27] In a perfect world, it would be lovely if everybody could have face-to-face tuition and if so, we would like them, ideally, to choose one of our approved learning partners, the list of which they can find on the website. If they haven't got good face-to-face tuition locally, additionally, there are approved learning partners for distance learning and many of the distance learning programmes offer virtual classrooms or chat rooms where students can enter into discussions and forums and still have access to tutors, as well. So, ideally, you use one of our approved learning providers, either face-to-face or distance learning.

**SM:** Okay. We've now got a video question, which is an innovation, from Acktar Boodhun from Mauritius. So, Acktar?

**AU:** [02:08] Hello, my name is Acktar Boodhun. I live in Mauritius, and here's my question. I have been using accredited textbooks for the purpose of the exams, but each year the previous textbooks are made

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obsolete and a new syllabus and text book is on the market. Do I need to buy new textbooks at each syllabus change or can I continue to use my existing ones? Thank you.

**SM:** Okay, just to recap, the question there was about the syllabus changing, and the question is, does he still need to buy new textbooks at each syllabus change, or can he continue to use the existing ones?

**CE:** [02:43] It's a tricky question and one we get asked very frequently. If you're studying financial reporting, auditing or law papers or tax papers, you're probably going to find there are quite reasonably substantial changes every year. We have annual cut-off date of 30 December for most papers, whereby the June and December of the following year are governed by the same legislation, accounting standards and so on. So, you will always need the right textbook for those papers. So, perhaps if you're aiming to do tax, law, audit, financial reporting, aim for a June exam session, just in case you're nervous about it and may have to re-sit, because it will be the same curriculum in the following December. For the business papers and the management accounting papers, performance management papers, there are fewer changes to the syllabus. We actually publish the study guide every six months and if there are any updates, it's usually to improve the quality and understanding of what's in the syllabus rather than make any major changes.

[03:40] And any changes are listed very clearly in the back of the study guide, which is available on the website. So, if you have an outdated study text that you're working from, then you can look at the changes in the study guide and perhaps do some additional reading. However, it's always best to go with an up-to-date text for the exam session you're studying towards, because every year our examiners take the study text from our approved learning providers, BPP and Kaplan. And they actually go thoroughly through those study texts and make recommendations for improvements.

**SM:** Right, well, Geoff, what about study texts available to help students specifically for the BSc Degree?

**GH:** [04:20] Yes, there are two excellent texts available, from BPP and from Kaplan. As students probably know, the project that you have to do to get awarded BSc changed significantly in August, 2008. So, the providers' texts were very, very different from 2008 onwards. But providing you have one of these texts, there will be no significant changes from year to year. And although providers do develop these texts from time to time, you will probably be okay in using last year's version.

**SM:** Okay, well, let's go now to Russia and Oxana Lossevskia from Moscow. And Oxana's question is about recommendations on how to self-study effectively, and she actually asks, how do you pass the exam? So, there's a big question for you, Catherine.

**CE:** [05:07] Okay. Well, I can actually talk about this from personal experience. When I did most of my exams, I did it by self-study distance learning, because

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I was balancing a family and a job, as well and so it made more sense. What I would strongly suggest are two things. First of all, you use one of the approved learning provider's distance learning packages, because that gives you access to your tutor when you've got questions and you get study tests that are marked, and so on, along the way, so you actually get a very constructive programme, even though you're not attending tuition. So, strongly would recommend that. Also, the other thing I would recommend is, at the start of any course that you purchase, to work your way through a plan and decide exactly what you're going to do and when, to make sure you're at the right place in time for the exams, and to build in some revision periods. So, it does take a lot of dedication and commitment, but obviously it's very much worth it.

**SM:** Well, you can't get better advice than somebody who's done it for herself, so there we are. I hope that answers that question. And we now come to the UK, and for Femina Kurlle, who asks another very practical question in this area, and Femina wants to know, "How can I make the best use of the 15 minute reading time in the exam?" So, what's your advice there?

**CE:** [06:17] That's a good question. All ACCA three hour exams have this 15 minute reading time. For a start, by saying, the one thing you cannot do is to start to actually physically write in your answer booklet, you cannot do that. However, the 15 minutes is to prepare you to answer the questions. If the paper contains compulsory questions only, so, that's the fundamentals level at ACCA or any of the CAT papers, that are three hours, what you probably want to do in your time is to read through the paper briefly, looking at the requirements of the questions, to pick out what order you may want to tackle them and then, once you've decided on that, to start working through the first question that you're going to tackle and reading through it, highlighting key points relating them, obviously, to the requirements. You can jot down, on the sides of the question paper, brief notes, bullet points about headings for your answer, brief calculations, as long as it's on the question paper, you're allowed to write, use a calculator and so on.

[07:15] For the professional level papers, again, you still have 15 minutes reading time, but you have bigger case studies at the start of the paper, and then, later in the paper, you have to choose, usually two from three, questions. So, the first few minutes are probably worth deciding which of the options you're going to take, so that you're choosing at the start of the exam rather than when stressed and under pressure, so, choosing which questions you're doing and then using the rest of the time to focus on the requirements of the case studies and starting to read through the case and to think about working towards those requirements.

**SM:** Okay. Some very practical help there. Don't forget, there are links on this page to –

**CE:** [07:53] To the reading and planning time. There's a very detailed article in *Student Accountant* that helps you with using this time.

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- SM:** Okay, great. Now to Ghana, and Douglas Boateng. And Douglas asks the question about what study resources and support are available from the ACCA? You just touched on that.
- CE:** [08:11] Yes, there's quite a lot available, for technical articles that we write in *Student Accountant*. Some of the articles are written by my team, in terms of advice on how to approach the examination. And, for every individual paper, both CAT and ACCA, there are technical articles geared to that paper. Also, of course, all the past exam papers are on the website. And, together with the past exam papers, there are also the examiner's reports. Now, these are invaluable, because these give your examiners insight as to what they're looking for specifically from the exam questions. And typical areas where students go wrong, obviously are tangent to why those answers are inappropriate, and so on. So, really valuable resources. As well as that, we've had, recently, some interviews recorded by examiners, where they've talked about their approach to the paper. These should definitely be looked at before you start to tackle an exam paper.
- [09:03] And, more recently, we've just recorded - though they're not yet available on the website, they'll be there any time now - we've recorded the examiners' impressions of the first three exams and of the current new syllabus, so, December 07 and both 08 papers. The examiners have gone into areas where students are doing very well, where students are doing less well, and giving students advice and help. This is the examiners giving them advice and help and suggestions of ways to improve performance, going forward. So, there's quite a large number of resources that we actually help students with. And, as I mentioned before, the study texts, although we don't do tuition ourselves or provide learning materials, we have got official publishers, BPP and Kaplan. And their study texts are reviewed every year by the examiners.
- SM:** So, an enormous body of support there, but specifically for the BSc Degree, Janielle Munroe from Trinidad wants to know where she can get the necessary study resources for that.
- GH:** [10:01] Okay, the first thing to do is you must look at the information pack that's on the ACCA website. This contains all the information that is compulsory, it tells you the structure of the project that you have to submit, it tells you all the details about times and dates to submit, and it tells you the word lengths of all the different elements of the project you have to submit. So, that is absolutely essential. You can get additional resources, by going to a provider. Many of the providers, the approved providers offer courses and mentoring advice, as well, for the project. You can use the texts that we mentioned earlier and, also, again, *Student Accountant*. There are a lot of articles coming up in *Student Accountant*. The next one to come out will be written by the external examiner for the project, and some of our moderation marking team will be writing articles, as well. And these are huge resources, in *Student Accountant*.

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- SM:** We should just say, when you say that, we're now in April 2009, if you're watching the archive version, this is many months from now, you might be, that article will have well been published, so there are other new articles at that point, too.
- GH:** And I hope you'll enjoy it.
- SM:** I'm sure you'll appreciate the feedback. What about the assessment criteria?
- GH:** [11:13] The assessment criteria is part of the information pack. What the assessment criteria does is define what you have to do to get a grade A, a grade B or a grade C, the different levels of pass. It also actually describes what you haven't done if you fail. So, look at the assessment criteria which exists for both elements of the project, for the report and for the Skills and Learning Statement. Do look at those, they're important. It's what the markers use when they mark your project, so, you know, look at them and learn from them.
- SM:** Fantastic. Well, now, a question from Mickson Mvula from Malawi. And Mickson says, "I'm currently studying for ACCA's CAT qualification, and I have three subjects outstanding. The tuition provider I use does not offer CAT, and there is no other college around which offers the course." So, that's a tricky one. "Is it possible to start the ACCA exams and finish CAT at a later stage?"
- CE:** [12:09] Actually, I have good news for the student. It is possible to register for ACCA once you've completed the first four CAT exams, the T1 through to T4. The downside is, you do have to pay to be registered as an ACCA student, as opposed to being transferred automatically on completion of the CAT qualification. However, CAT qualification is important, so, by moving on to ACCA now, you are able to go back and claim your CAT as long as you've done F1, F2, F3, the knowledge module, and two out of three exams, F6, F8 and F9, so that's the tax audit and financial management papers, so, they're the equivalent of the CAT ones, plus taken one year's work experience. If you've done that, you can go back and claim CAT at that stage, as well.
- SM:** Okay, another technical question – we'll come back to some issues on CAT – but Jona Rwambiwa from Zimbabwe, asks this question, "What happens if you fail to complete the ACCA exams within the stipulated ten year period?" And not really clear here about what the ten year period is and when the clock starts and all that?
- CE:** [13:17] Well, there's good news for ACCA students, because once we went to December 2007, the start of 2007, we effectively restarted the clock, because it was a new qualification, and the ten years applies only to do your examination part of your qualification, you can take longer to complete your professional, practical experience requirements. So, for ACCA students, you've got 'till 2017, wherever you first registered, although it's unlikely we're ever going to start the clock again, because we'll be rolling things forward very gently. So, I think it's good news for people.

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- SM:** So, everyone has now got until 2017.
- CE:** 2017, for the exams.
- SM:** So, we should be okay, we're now sitting in 2009. Are there any implications, Geoff, for people – students transferred from CAT?
- GH:** [14:03] Yes, I ought to say, the news is perhaps not such good news for the BSc project, in that we didn't restart the clock in 2007, so, you do only have ten years to complete the Degree, from your start date, which is defined as the date on which you are eligible to sit paper-based exams, and that goes right back to the year 2000. Students who transfer from CAT or, indeed, from the mature students' route, do not get their clock started again, they take their start date as it originally was when they first enrolled or registered with CAT. So, we're slightly harder, I'm afraid.
- CE:** [14:43] And can I just add one thing? If students in the UK are looking for a practising certificate in audit after qualifying, and they've had exemptions, there are some special rules that apply to them. It's a small group of the population so I won't go into them now, but if that's your situation, do check, obviously, on the website.
- SM:** Okay, to Botswana now, and Seno Gaosikelwe, who asks, "What advice can you give students who keep failing a particular paper?" And this particular student says, "Reading the examiner's remarks just doesn't seem to help." So, Catherine.
- CE:** [15:15] If I can give some practical advice. I used to be a tutor, for over ten years, in accountancy, before coming to ACCA, and, unfortunately, a number of students would come to me with this sort of concern. What I strongly recommend is, actually, mapping out, almost day-by-day if you can, a question to do. So, coming home from work, two or three nights a week, and taking on a question, working through that question from start to finish, under exam conditions, not looking at the back of the book, but using an up-to-date revision kit, not an outdated one, so you've got the best available material. And when you've worked the question, comparing properly your answer to the answer at the back, looking at it in conjunction with the examiner's comments on that question from the real world, and learning from it, making notes and taking from it. So, if it's a 45 minute question, we're probably look at you doing an hour and half of work, 45 minutes writing the question, and probably another 45 minutes to go through it.
- [16:12] So, you're not just reading the examiner's comments, you're looking at them in conjunction with your answer and the question itself. And aiming to do that for a few months before the exams, maybe two or three evenings a week and two or three hours at the weekend on top of that, to really build up a very good knowledge. And, if you haven't previously attended one, try and attend a revision course locally, that might help bolster your confidence, as well, and give you good exam technique tips, because that might be what's letting you down as well as lack of knowledge.

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- SM:** And that technique you just described, did that work for the people you tutored?
- CE:** [16:43] It has helped, it's really very much helped, there's a number of people who used to come to retake courses, and who had been somewhere else and maybe taking exams for the sixth or seventh or eighth time, used to get very good results.
- SM:** It's very important to write out the whole answer, not just look at it.
- CE:** [16:55] Yeah, not audit an answer, and then learn from the differences between your answers given, and what the examiner is saying. So, it's all part of the process.
- SM:** Geoff, in terms of the BSc specifically – and I want to ask you particularly about the project within the BSc, what about those who fail the project?
- GH:** [17:16] Yes. It's worth pointing out that we don't give students now the opportunity to attempt seven, eight or nine times. It's three times, three strikes and you're out. Although, any student who failed the project before August, 2008, will not have those attempts counted. So, it's three attempts from the new project which started in August, 2008. Any student who fails gets feedback on the feedback sheet, which relates specifically to their project. The marker will give individual feedback to the students, so it's important that the student reads that feedback and understands it. Again, all the resources that are available, articles, look through articles and look through the information pack to see where you went wrong.
- SM:** The project, I understand, has two parts to it. What if I fail one and pass the other, what's the position?
- GH:** [18:07] Okay. The two parts are the report and the Skills and Learning Statement. Unlike the earlier version of the project, now, if you only fail one of those and pass the other, you need only submit the part that you failed and the part that you passed stays. If that's the Skills and Learning Statement, that counts as a pass, if it were the report element, which is now graded, then you're allowed to keep that grade.
- SM:** Now, this is a good opportunity, actually, a natural way to go into the BSc, specifically, the number of questions about the Degree. One, for example, Yusuf Daud from Qatar, and Aungkyaw Thet from Myanmar says, "What are the eligibility criteria for the Degree programme?"
- GH:** [18:51] Okay, these are quite complex and quite specific. Firstly, you must be opted in. And what this means is, you must be effectively registered with Oxford Brookes University, to take the Degree. We cannot award Degrees to students who aren't enrolled, effectively, are registered with Oxford Brookes University. The good news is that, as soon as you enrol or register with the ACCA, you're automatically opted in. Under the terms of the Data Protection

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Act, we do have to give students the right to opt out. And this is done by asking them to tick a box if they really don't want anything to do with the Degree and opt out. The vast majority of students, quite sensibly, stay opted in, because there seems to be no point in opting out, it's purely a legal requirement. It doesn't cost any money to remain opted in.

**CE:** [19:40] And you don't have to do the Degree just because you've opted in.

**GH:** You don't have to do the Degree just because you've opted in, it's a no-brainer to not tick the box. However, in the heat of the moment, we're aware of the fact that some students perhaps misread it and tick the box thinking they're opting in. This has significance for the Degree in that you must opt in before you take papers, F7, F8 and F9. The overall eligibility criteria, apart from being opted in, you have to pass or get exempted from papers F1 to F9, but you must pass F7, F8 and F9, and not claim any exemptions from F7, F8 or F9. This is because they correspond to the minimum one third of academic content that has to be taken with a University while you're registered with them. So, F7, F8, F9, have special significance, in two ways. Firstly, they must be passed, you can't claim exemptions, secondly, you must opt in before you take F7, F8, F9.

[20:43] In addition, to be awarded the Degree, you must complete the ethics module, and, finally, you must submit and pass, in the maximum of three attempts, the research and analysis project. That's it. It sounds easy.

**SM:** Just on that tick box thing, just to really reiterate, the issue is that some people perhaps are ticking that box without realising the implications of it, and you're forced to ask. And what stage do they get that tick box? To be really clear.

**GH:** [21:10] The tick box is there at the time they first enrol with the ACCA. However, their status, whether it's opted in or opted out, is available to them every time they log into their ACCA portal. So, it's worthwhile just checking, make sure you are still opted in, or if you're confused, check it, and then contact ACCA if you're unsure.

**SM:** And in terms of the eligibility criteria you just went through, this information obviously exists, where does this exist?

**GH:** [21:41] This is all on the information pack, which is available on the ACCA website. Note that all the information relating to this Degree is on the ACCA website, not on Oxford Brookes University website. If you look at the university website, all you will see is a link to the ACCA website.

**SM:** Now, you mentioned a paper there, and we've had a number of questions specifically about one paper, which is paper four, the Corporate and Business Law paper, which, of course, is the first paper in which students have to discuss issues rather than do multiple choice. What kind of advice can you give students specifically about that, and about that paper?

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**CE:** [22:19] Well, starting, first of all, it's the first written paper, as you rightly say, so, it's very important students actually work answers and write them in full. Again, talking about my experience as a tutor, before, it's very tempting for a lot of students, because it's the first written paper, just to read questions, jot down one or two bullet points, check the answers at the back of the question pack, and think, "oh, I'd have got that, I'd have written that in time," whereas, actually, there's nothing that can beat writing the question out in full. For some students, if English is not their first language, they might find this paper a bit of a struggle, and they may be aware that the ACCA's partner, Cambridge Assessments, produced the international certificate – sorry, it's Cambridge Certificate, we're partnered with them, the International Certificate in Financial English, and this is something they may consider doing alongside the ACCA studies to help bring up their level of English. Because, of course, the law papers, the first of the written papers, as they go through the exams, there's many more quite detailed written papers.

**SM:** Now, Geoff, I know that Paper F4 has particular significance for the Degree, can you just explain that.

**GH:** [23:22] Yes, it does. All students have to have a certain level of English to gain a UK University Degree, and there are certain accepted standard qualifications for this. Sometimes students, because of exemptions, and certain groups that came in, may not specifically have those qualifications. If they don't, provided they pass F4 – F4 is considered to be – because it's the first written paper and it's a largely textual paper, F4 is considered to be sufficient to satisfy the English language requirement for the Degree. So, if you have no other English Language qualification, then F4 will suffice.

**SM:** A very, very important paper, clearly, in the whole – for both reasons. Well, let's come to the UK, and a question from Muhammad Siddiqui about the Degree, and he asks, "Is the Oxford Brookes University BSc Degree the same standard as a Degree achieved by a full-time student studying at a UK university?" And he particularly asks, "Can the Degree be used to get admissions onto a Masters course at other top universities?"

**GH:** [24:29] Okay, let's take that in two parts. The first part is a fairly complex question. This Degree is equivalent to any other accounting degree from Oxford Brookes University. We can't say every Degree in every subject from every university is exactly the same. But, you may be aware that all the universities are governed by the government controlled Quality Assurance Agency, and every course, including this one, has to be controlled and quality assured by the QAA. So, you know, it is of a normal UK University Degree quality. As far as entry to Masters is concerned, it's an interesting question, and I think students need to be aware that although many, many students have used our Degree as entry to Masters programmes all over the world, at the end of the day, it is up to the institution, the university or college or whatever, that's offering the Masters degree, to make that decision.

[25:24] They may require from the student, more details of the Degree, if this is one they haven't come across. And that's perfectly normal, that happens in

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any Masters application. The one document they will often require is a transcript. Now, all students will automatically get a Degree certificate, they don't automatically get a transcript. But, if they need one, and it's usually for Masters-level entry, then we can supply it from our office. We supply two copies free of charge. So, that can be done, and that normally does the trick.

- SM:** Just briefly, I wonder if you want to say anything for students who are weighing up different Degree options about this kind of Degree, which is obviously so plugged into the ACCA?
- CE:** [26:03] I mean, for some students, if they're convinced, when they're leaving school, that they wish to become accountants, it might be a good career move to try and get employment if they possibly can, at the age of 18, where they can study the ACCA Qualification and do the Brookes Degree alongside, rather than going to university, which rocks up tuition fees and costs and so on. So, they could potentially be a qualified accountant by the age of 21, as well as having a Degree. So, that's a possibility to consider with this relationship that we have.
- SM:** And these days, having a Degree that has such practical applications is important. Can we just go to Pakistan, still on the Degree issue, and Usman Farooq asks the question, "Could you explain the Skills and Learning Statement and just what's required?" Briefly, if you can.
- GH:** [26:49] Yeah, okay. The research analysis project, as I said earlier, comprises two parts. It's a Research Report and a Skills and Learning Statement. And the idea of the Skills and Learning Statement is to test, and enable the student to provide evidence of reflection and presentation skills, communication skills. And so what we require for the self-assessment skills, you will see in the information pack, there are four questions that need to be answered. They all relate, in fact, to the work that's been done on the research report, in relation to the student's mentor, which we might have a chance to talk about in a little bit. The second part, the presentation, the student must do a presentation and whatever format they've done that presentation, which maybe on slides or it may be using a PowerPoint, they must produce that as well, as evidence. So, these are graduate skills that the Skills and Learning Statement is testing.
- SM:** Now, I know there have been some recent changes to the Degree, and there's a question about them from Olabode Bodunde from Nigeria, who asks for clarification on those changes, Geoff.
- GH:** [27:56] Okay. From August, 2008, the project became substantially larger. It's now worth 60 credits instead of 30 credits. The word count has gone up. It also has to be done in the context of an organisation and within a business context as well as just the financial context. So, it is a more substantial piece of work than it was before. On a more structural level, the project is now graded. And if you're at the margin of the Degree classification, it's possible that the grade of the project could up your class of Degree. So, it's worthwhile going for a good grade on that. We've made some changes more recently to

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the timing. The ethics module, as I mentioned earlier, must be taken, although, as Catherine might point out, it doesn't have to be taken for all students prior to 2007 for the ACCA Qualification, but it does have to be taken for the Oxford Brookes Degree.

**SM:** Do you want to say anything, briefly, on the ethics module?

**CE:** [28:59] Just in terms of, we require students, as part of their ACCA Qualification, they've got exams to do, they've got practical experience to do, and they have to take the ethics module if they registered with us after 1 January 2007, as part of their overall qualification. If they were registered with us before January 07, they're not required to take the ethics module for the ACCA Qualification, although we strongly recommend it, it's a very good thing to do. But they are required to complete it for the Brookes Degree.

**GH:** That's right.

**SM:** Just a couple of final kind of questions on functional things to do with the Degree. Firstly, date, can you just remember the dates of the Degree?

**GH:** [29:36] We've rationalised the dates to try to make them a bit easier to remember, and also so that we don't have to provide new dates every year. The deadline for completing the ethics module is now 15 October and 15 April, which I believe is the same –

**CE:** As the exam registration.

**GH:** As students have to register for exams. So, that should be easy to remember, even though I didn't. And the submission periods for the project are now May and November, so, the deadline is effectively, 31 May and 30 November.

**SM:** Can I just let you know that we've reached our 30 minute mark, but, as you know, we had to crunch a lot of questions into this. We've still got a number of questions we want to answer, so, we're going to continue with these questions from students around the world, and go on a bit longer. And still on the BSc Degree, a question from Ghana, from Dinah Ayitey-Adjin. And Dinah asks, "When do students actually get their Degree certificates?"

**GH:** [30:41] Normally within three months of getting their results letter.

**SM:** Another question, from someone who is obviously busy and struggling to juggle everything, Jayselle McFarlane from Trinidad. I'm sure a number of students will sympathise with some of this, which is, Jayselle says, "I was busy struggling with work and family obligations, as well as studying, and completely missed the opportunity, to sign up for the BSc Degree before completing the relevant papers." So, she's concerned, is there any chance that she can still obtain the BSc Degree? It's another kind of opt in question, really, isn't it?

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- GH:** [31:18] It is, yeah. I'm unsure why the student missed – if the student inadvertently ticked the box, as we mentioned, then it's okay to come back in, to opt back in, as long as you do before F7, F8, F9. Although, I detect from the phrasing of the question that that's not the case here, and it's possible that the student ran out of time and overran the ten years. And, I'm afraid, in that case, there's nothing we can do for the BSc Degree. However, the student may be aware that there is an MBA programme, that once you're a member, then you can join the MBA programme, and get exemption, effectively from the finance part of the MBA. So, the MBA programme run in conjunction with Oxford Brookes University and the ACCA. So, that's an option for students who missed out.
- SM:** Okay, so, there's every chance that that person actually is able to –
- GH:** [32:10] May be able to, if they haven't actually done F7, F8 and F9.
- SM:** And others in that situation, you've just to double-check whether you really are ineligible. Joyce Mbataru from the United States, says, "look, most students won't be able to travel to the UK for the graduation ceremonies, what are your plans about having graduation ceremonies in other countries?"
- GH:** [32:29] Well, for the last few years, we've been running a ceremony each year in the Far East. We tend to alternate between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, this year it's Singapore this August. We've also added some extra dates for the UK, as well as the normal September/October graduation ceremony, we now do on in April. We're also planning, for the first time this year, a graduation ceremony in Africa, which will be in Nairobi. And we're also planning for, around about November, there's a possibility of another ceremony in China/Hong Kong area. At the moment, there are no plans to go to North or South America or the Caribbean, because the number of students there doesn't warrant it. But, who knows what might happen in the future?
- SM:** Okay, so, if enough of you do it, there may well be a ceremony over there, okay. Just briefly, we are running very tight on time, but there are a number of things we want to quickly rattle through if we can. John Mitanda, from Uganda, is looking for tips on choosing a topic for his research and analysis project within the BSc. So, any top tips?
- GH:** [33:31] Right, first tip, choose a topic from the list of 20 that's in the information pack. Don't start going outside that 20, although, technically, I might approve that you're unlikely to pass, our evidence seems to be that you stand a bigger chance of failure if you don't stick to the mainstream topics. Choose something that you're interested in. The topic must be within the context of an organisation, and it must be within a business context.
- SM:** Okay. Finally, I know a big subject for a lot of people is the issue of finding a project mentor. And there have been a number of questions on this, from Oluwakami Olubamowo from Nigeria, asks, for example, "Is a project mentor going to be assigned to me or do I need to find one for myself?"

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- GH:** [34:16] No, you have to find one for yourself. The three categories of people that can be a project mentor are, a college tutor, and that's our preferred option, if you have access to a college who provides this as an extra module, then they will hopefully provide a tutor, as well. It may be your line manager or the owner of the company. Or it can be another ACCA member, not an affiliate, but an ACCA member.
- SM:** And how – there's a question from John Arrah from Cameroon, just very simply, and this is a question that came in earlier, "How do I find a project mentor?" Any tips on that?
- GH:** [34:53] Go to your college. If you work in an organisation, it's possibly you'll be using that organisation as the subject for your research report, so, it would make sense to use a mentor from there. But, it's also worth pointing out, there is going to be an article in a couple of months, or, if you're watching this in a few months time, there already has been, an article on making the most out of your project mentor, so that you can use the project mentor to the best of your ability. Bear in mind, the project mentor isn't like a tutor, it's not like a research project tutor, they are – they don't have to have specialist knowledge in a subject, they're acting as a sounding board for you to make your presentation to and ask questions. And I'm providing, within the next few weeks, a lot more information in the information pack, to project mentors, about what their role is and what they have to do.
- SM:** Okay, we've covered a lot of subjects. And Catherine, if we could just briefly finish with you, to ask you about, you know, the global economic situation, we talked about it earlier in *ACCA Engage*, about being an ACCA student right now. Any thoughts on the issues or the challenges, or the opportunities there?
- CE:** [36:00] Well, there's always a demand for a well-qualified accountant, and, clearly, the ACCA Qualification is respected world-wide. So, I urge students to continue with their studies, and if you're not able to get full-time employment at this time, if they look back at the last Engage on practical experience requirements, we give lots of tips of how to get other work experiences that count towards their 36 months. So, that when people are employing again, they're very well placed to get jobs because they're most of the way through their qualification, if not all of the way. And, of course, they can –
- GH:** [36:29] Well, once you've got to F9, and past that, you've got most of the Degree, anyway. You're nearly there. You've actually got 330 out of 360 credits towards your Degree, and it makes sense to do the project, get awarded your BSc in Applied Accounting.
- SM:** Well, there we are. I hope you don't mind, we've gone over our time, but there's a lot to get through and hopefully a lot of very interesting information. But that's about it for this programme. Thank you, Geoff and Catherine, for your answers. And thank you, too, for submitting your questions and for watching this presentation. We really hope it's been useful, helpful and relevant. This edition of *ACCA student engage* will remain accessible via the ACCA website during the year, so please feel free to watch it again, if there's

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anything you missed, and do please encourage your fellow students, or even those thinking about becoming ACCA qualified, to take the time to watch. I hope you'll agree it's worthwhile.

[37:25] Earlier today, we recorded Members Engage, which features the President and Chief Executive of ACCA, answering questions from members, and that's also available to watch on the website and is interesting viewing. Details of other events supporting you in your studies will appear in Student Accountant and on ACCA's website. But that's it for now. Good luck with your studies and thank you very much for watching. Goodbye.

[END]