

CIOT President's page: Future proofing

Welcomes



21 August 2024

Recently, the CIOT celebrated its 20,000th member. That's quite a milestone and shows that our qualification, and membership, goes from strength to strength.

Passing technical examinations is central to becoming a member of the CIOT. Congratulations to all CIOT students who sat exams in the May 2024 session, as you make your way towards becoming a Chartered Tax Adviser. Members of a professional body need to demonstrate a high standard of technical knowledge (no client wants their tax bill to be half right!), along with being able to apply this knowledge to their client's personal and/or commercial circumstances. Knowledge of tax law, tax administration and expected professional behaviours are a prerequisite. Much is expected of our members and our entry qualification reflects this.

Our working environment is not static, though, and times move on. Since I sat ATII examinations in 1988, self-assessment has been introduced, the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise have merged, and the workplace has transformed beyond

recognition. Where will the profession be in the next 35 years, and what will be expected of CTA students in order to get there? We should also ask what the tax landscape may be like in 10 years' time.

This year's CTA Address, 'The impact of AI on tax', gave a helpful indicator of where the profession may be headed. It is expected that tax technology will continue, and increasingly use, technical knowledge on our behalf. The responsibilities and risk will continue to sit with the adviser, though. There are key questions therefore around how future tax advisers should learn the basics and gain a general understanding of tax planning if these can be readily sourced from AI packages.

Equally important is how advisers learn to assess the AI outputs to determine whether they are correct and sound. What does the CTA of the future need to advise clients and run a profitable practice? How much knowledge needs to be learnt? What skills are needed to find the relevant information, assess its validity and present that information to clients?

The CIOT is conducting a review of the CTA qualification with a view to presenting options to Council in late October. There is a working group comprising of representatives from firms both large and small from across the UK, a tutorial body representative and a newly qualified CTA. Much thought is being given to what is sought from the CTA of the future, what should be in the syllabus and how this should be examined. One option is to keep the syllabus and examinations much as they are – but others include:

- integrating AI throughout the syllabus and assessments from understanding the data to evaluation of the outputs from AI systems;
- introducing professional skills to complement the application of technical knowledge, which will become more important as tax technology develops;
- reconsidering the syllabus, structure and assessment methods of the qualification generally to create flexibility and accessibility;
- increasing the emphasis and integration of professional ethics into the qualification; and
- bringing together elements into a new module to increase understanding of the tax landscape, from working with legislative change to tax investigations and dispute resolution.

As a professional body, constituted as a charity, it is essential that we are true to our charitable objects – our primary purpose is to promote education in taxation. We need to continue to offer the best entry qualification possible for the future, which must be robust, suitable for a number of years, and be well respected by all stakeholders, including employers and prospective students. It would be helpful to hear from members who have particular points or concerns regarding the future of the CTA qualification. Please email your comments to education@ciot.org.uk.

The CIOT Council wishes to continue growing the membership and for our Institute to continue to be the leading professional body in the UK for advisers dealing with all aspects of taxation. A key element of this is our examinations, which have evolved over the years, and will no doubt benefit from this review.

Equally important, of course, is CPD – continuing professional development – but that’s for another article. In the meanwhile, I’ll hope to meet members at events over the coming months.