

Position of Nordic Actuarial Associations regarding the level of detail in the (IAA) AAE Education Core Syllabus

The Nordic Actuarial Associations (in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland) have some concerns about the direction in which the application of the Education Core Syllabus is going.

Currently the requirement is for all Learning Areas to be covered, and Topics and Sub-Topics are to be seen as an expression of what one might reasonably expect in coverage of a Learning Area. We are happy with this definition, and we accepted the details of the Core Syllabus given that definition of requirement.

However, the IAA now appears to be changing direction and requires that within certain Learning Areas not only all Topics are covered, but also 80% of all Sub-Topics within a Topic. This means that an association's education program needs to be mapped to the Core Syllabus at a Sub-Topic level. We are concerned that given the changes at the IAA level, the AAE will come under pressure to make similar changes.

Whilst we recognize the advantage of providing a mapping from an education program to the Core Syllabus at a Topic level (even if all Topics need not be covered), we do not find it appropriate nor practical to do so at a Sub-Topic level.

In addition, we are concerned that despite previous discussion, the mapping would make reference to Bloom's Taxonomy, which is totally impractical for associations using universities as a provider of education.

Background¹

For a long time (in many cases more than 100 years) actuarial education in our countries has been provided by a number of key universities.

In these countries we have long-standing partnerships with these universities that has worked well. Over more recent years our bachelor's and master's programs in actuarial science have been adapted towards the AAE requirements. This has in some instances meant deemphasizing the pure actuarial mathematics subjects, whilst broadening the program to include other elements of relevance to actuarial work in practice. The universities have cooperated well in this process, and we now have programs that suit well the needs of a modern-day actuary. Also note that we have a strong influence on the actuarial science programs, often with our members being involved in the teaching.

The requirements to become a "qualified actuary" in our associations are based on a sound grounding in mathematics, mathematical statistics and financial mathematics together with courses in actuarial science at one of the aforementioned key universities. In addition, we have some smaller courses/seminars at the associations that we use to "gap fill" (not least for professionalism topics). We each have a core syllabus, which we use to benchmark the relevant university courses.

¹ This section applies to Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.

Issues²

We see the following issues arising from having to map to the AAE(/IAA) Syllabus at a Sub-Topic level:

1. Many of us have a mapping from the AAE Syllabus to our own syllabus, and then a mapping from our syllabus to the relevant university courses. Obviously, the more detail in the mapping the more confusing and inaccurate this two-stage mapping process becomes.
2. Universities have a description of each module, which is approved by the relevant university body. However, this description is at a more general level and the governance of the university allows lecturers flexibility around the course content (within the bounds of the description). The level of detail at the Sub-Topic level means that we cannot formally map to course modules.
3. Where a number of different universities are involved (in particular for the underlying mathematics and mathematical statistics learning areas), it is just impossible to create a consistent mapping from these courses to the AAE Syllabus. We can assess the quality of the courses and the subject matter, but not at the detail of Sub-Topic levels.
4. Most universities do not use Bloom's taxonomy, and for this reason reference to Bloom's taxonomy in our local syllabi and mapping according Bloom's taxonomy is just not possible in practice.
5. We are concerned that focus on too much content detail diverts focus away from an assessment of the quality of the various programs, which we think is actually far more important.

Conclusions

We would emphasize that we could work with the current AAE requirements, as they stand. The problem arises in the case that the AAE feels pressured to adapt to the more recent proposals of the IAA.

We would therefore encourage the AAE to actively seek to influence the IAA to change its position regarding mapping to a Sub-Topic level, and instead focus on an assessment of quality.

Svenska Aktuari föreningen

Den Danske Aktuarforening

Den Norske Aktuarforening

Suomen Aktuaariyhdistys

² This section applies to Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.