

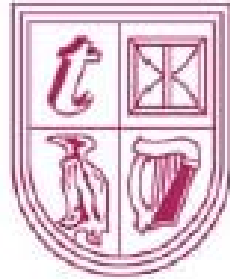
How to pass CA3

**The communications exam
24 November 2011**



Agenda

- Introduction Mike Claffey
- The tutor's view Des O'Sullivan
- The student's view Thomas Donohoe
- Questions and Discussion



How to pass CA3

Introduction
MIKE CLAFFEY



CA3 Communications

- Based on concepts in the CT and CA1 subjects. Questions are set within a financial framework.
- There is a written component (50%),
- and a presentation component (50%)

- Four exam locations in the UK (Edinburgh, Reading, London, Oxford)
- Dublin can enter for an online course on 21/22 February 2012



Pass rates

- Low
 - Since its introduction as a report writing exam
 - And still low as a two day attendance exam
- Approx 40% pass rate (2011 - max 53%, min 29%, St Dev 6%)
- Multiple repeats – people get “stuck”
- You need to pass each “aspect” (more on this from Des later)



Recommended study time

	Hours
CT1 – CT8	125-150
CT9	20
CA1	400
CA2	50
CA2 online	50
CA3	50
ST	200
SA	300



FAQ's

Are there any text books for CA3 exam?

- No

I have booked to go on a tutorial - do I need to go on it?

- No

When will the results be issued following the exam?

- Friday, 12 weeks following the exam.

Can I appeal if I fail the exam?

- Yes

Is exam counselling available for subject CA3?

- Yes



The exam

- Pre-exam workbook containing a number of exercises

The two day exam then covers:

- **Day One:** preparation for the assessment, led by external communication specialist
- **Day Two:**
 - Q1 - written assessment
 - Q2 - individually assessed, by an actuary and a non-actuary, in a 5-10 minute oral presentation, which will be filmed.



CA3 retaker exam

Day One:

- Complete an online slide presentation paper (2 hours for download question, produce slides, upload slides)
- You will need a PC and access to the internet, and you may also like to print materials

Day Two:

- Same as the second day of the full two day exam (i.e. must attend a course)



CA3 retaker online

Day One

- 2 hours to download question, prepare slides, upload slides

Day Two morning:

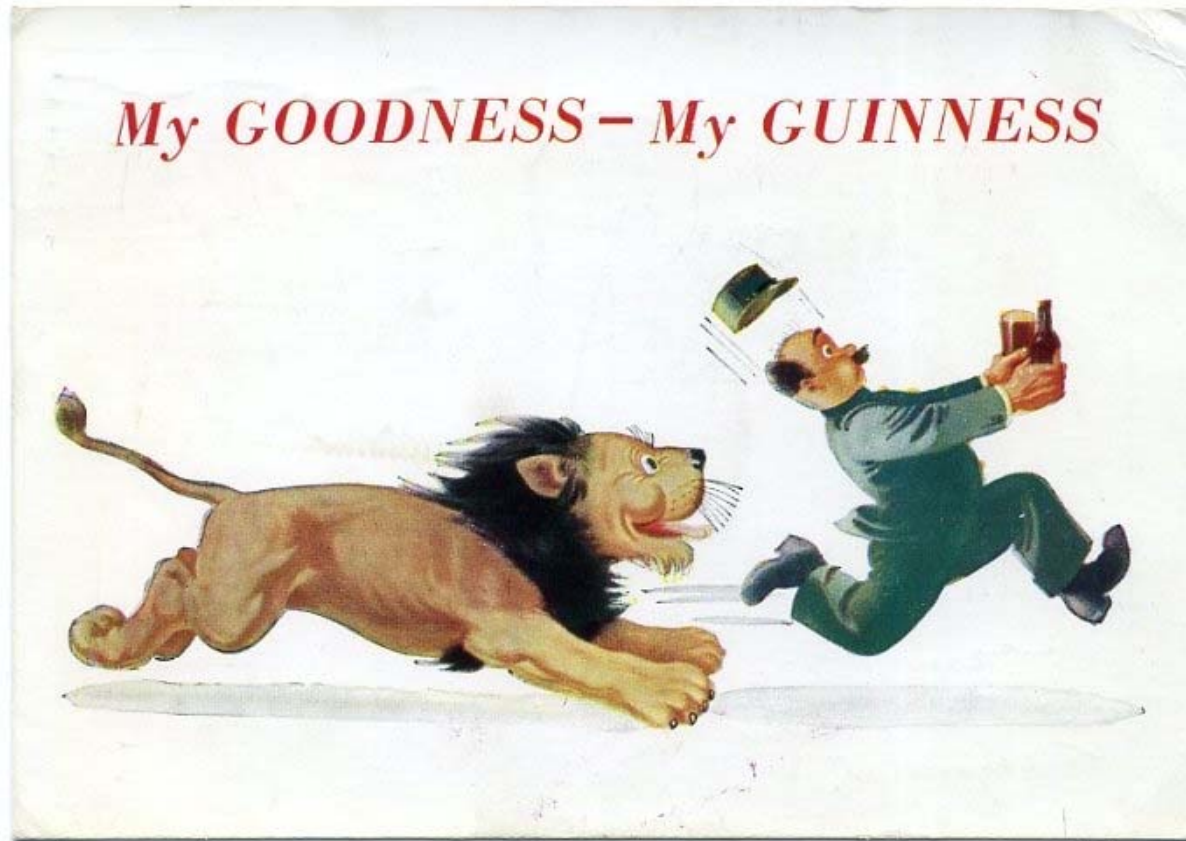
- One hour in which you must record your 10 minute presentation
- You present to an external webcam or a webcam on a laptop
- Your slides appear on your computer as you are giving the presentation so you can gesture to them and move to the next slides
- You only get one chance to do the recording
- Once you've finished the recording it is automatically uploaded

Day Two afternoon:

- 1 hour and 45 minutes to download the written question, prepare an answer in Word, and upload your answer



The secret to passing CA3



Make fewer mistakes than other candidates



The presentation exam

Logistics:

- Room set-up
- Flip chart
- Two examiners
- Two technicians

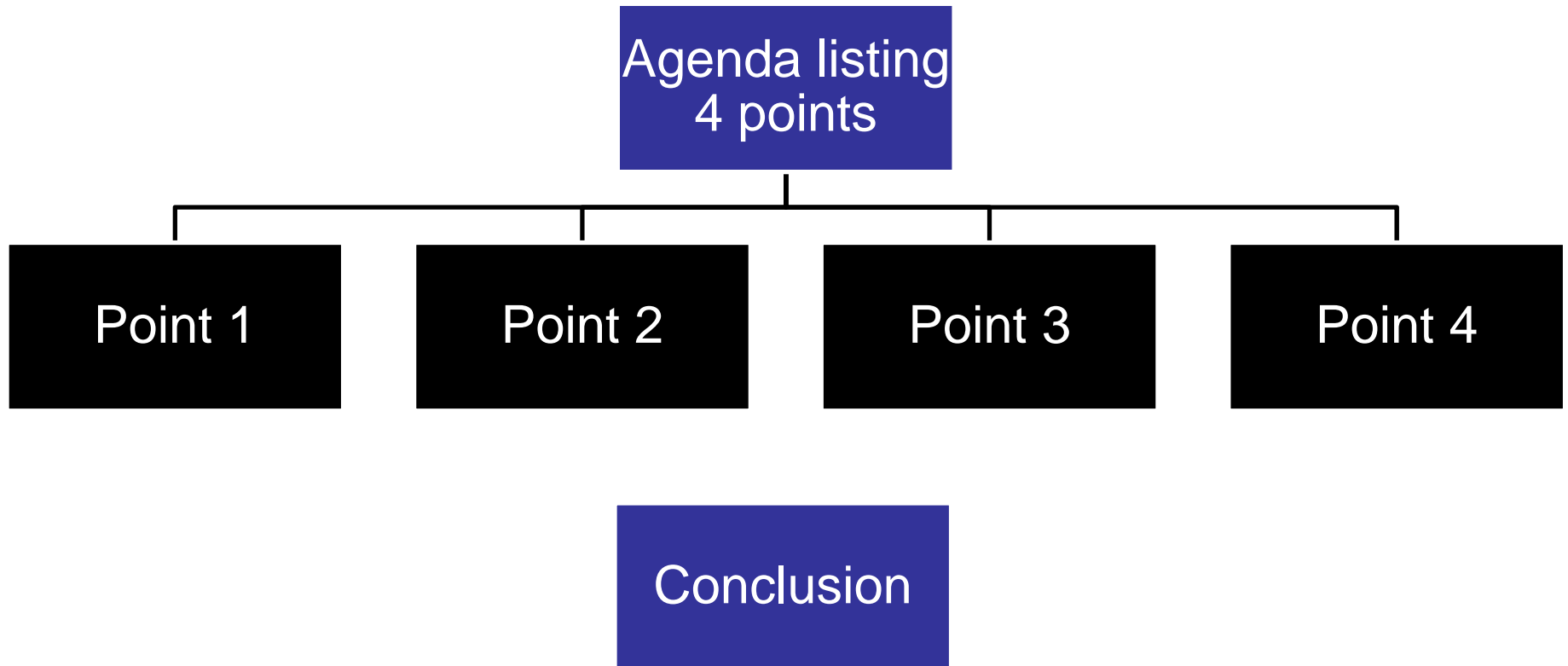


Presentations

- Know your tools
 - PowerPoint
 - Graphs in Excel
- Avoid exclusively lists of bullet points
- Make a firm conclusion: **yes** or **no!**
- Wear your interview suit
- Use cue cards or notes only if you practice
- Any examiner questions at end are not tricks (you can't fail on a question)



Consider using a fixed number of slides





How can I prepare?

Rehearse

Decide how you want to rehearse in the actual exam (night one and mid-morning two)

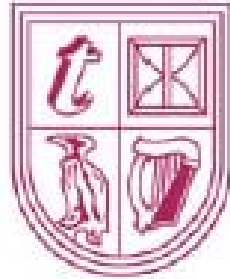


And consider having rehearsed generic sentences to use



Final thoughts

- The examiners want you to pass
- There is a marking scheme (Des will cover this)
- Have a plan – slides, cue cards, standard lines
- Rehearse in front of people
- Keep it simple and clean



How to pass CA3

DES O'SULLIVAN



How to pass CA3

- Why candidates fail
- Preparation strategies
- The exam
- The marking process



Why candidates fail



Why Candidates Fail

- Lack of General Preparation
 - “I’m as literate as the next candidate...”
 - “How hard can that be?...”
 - The Two-way nature of communication



Why Candidates Fail

- Lack of Understanding of Business Writing
 - Business writing is not Technical Writing
 - Purpose
 - Conventions
 - How business writing works



Why Candidates Fail

- Lack of Understanding of Questions
 - Reading the question
 - Where's the catch?
 - Overcomplicating
 - Missing the point



Why Candidates Fail

- Basic Failings

- Poor spelling
- Poor grammar
- Poor sentence/paragraph structure

ARE UNUSUAL

- BUT poorly structured/badly thought through answers are not



Preparation strategies



Preparation Strategies

- Practice
- Peer Groups
- Tuition
- Work-based presentation courses
- Practice some more



Preparation Strategies

- Practice
 - Complete as many questions as possible
 - Start without worrying about the clock
 - Worry about the clock
 - Share your answers



Preparation Strategies

- Peer Groups
 - Share reading and preparation as well as answers
 - Don't restrict the peer group to fellow students



Preparation Strategies

- Tuition
 - ActEd
 - Others?



Preparation Strategies

- Work-based presentation courses
 - Avail of these where possible
 - CAUTION → tend to be Sales-oriented
 - Good on basics and presentation tips



Preparation Strategies

- Practice some more
 - And when you've done that, practice again
 - Practice reading questions
 - Practice planning questions



The exam



The exam

- Time
- The “presentable first draft”
- The plan
- The issue(s)
- The basics



Time

- Timing
 - Be aware of time at all times
- Use of time
 - Value of PRACTICE



The “presentable first draft”

- “...to produce a piece of communication which is at least a presentable first draft...”
- **AN UNFINISHED DOCUMENT IS NOT PRESENTABLE**



The plan

- What's the plan?
 - Structure
 - Signposting
 - Logic



The issue(s)

- What do they want from me?
 - What are the issues?
 - Can I explain underlying concept(s)?
 - Can I do this without inflicting suffering on the reader?



The basics

- Keep the basics under control
 - A letter/a report/an email...
 - Spelling/grammar
 - Sentence/paragraph structure
 - Jargon
 - Repetition
 - Use of numbers



The marking process



The marking process

- Is marking subjective?
- Marking breakdown
- Does knowledge of the marking system help?
- What the examiner wants



Is marking subjective?

- No two answers are the same
 - No 'model answers'
- Devils and details



Marking breakdown

- In fact, marking is broken into very specific areas

Q1		Q2
40%	Planning & Presentation	30%
40%	Content	25%
20%	Overall Impression	15%
-	The Presentation (delivery)	30%



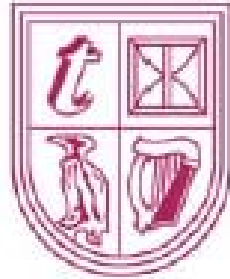
Does knowledge of the marking system help?

- Can't hurt, but it's still a little knowledge
- Focus has to be on the points we've discussed
- What the examiner wants



What the examiner wants

- Opportunity to give marks
 - ‘Free marks’ → back to basics
 - 30-40% of marks available for getting the basics right
 - Where are the REAL marks?



How to pass CA3

THOMAS DONOHOE



My experience with CA3...

- Repeat Offender – failed the written exam three times
- Sat the pilot online exam in June 2011 and finally passed
- Learned the mistakes that I was making previously and put new techniques into practice



Three Key Elements ...

- 1) Prepare Properly
- 2) Planning Structure of Contents
- 3) Relax... and take your time



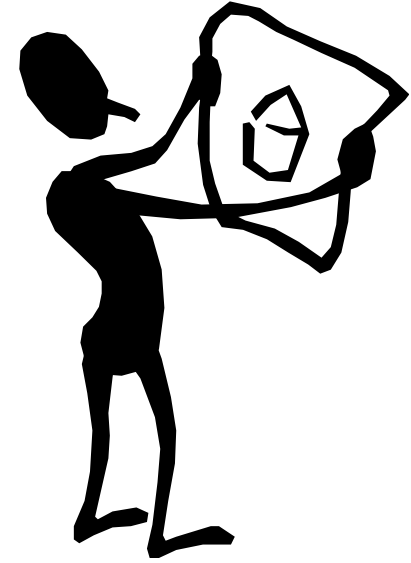
1. Prepare Properly

- Previously – couldn't / didn't give it my full attention
- 50 hours – if prepare properly it's not actually that bad
- Quality preparation =
 - Practicing questions under time pressure,
 - Preparing and recording presentations
 - Getting feedback from friends (best) and colleagues





2. Planning Structure of Contents



i. Introduction

- a) Set context and tone
- b) Explain what you will cover

ii. Main Body

- a) Reflect your understanding of the question
- b) Deal with issues one at a time
- c) Use short sentences and paragraphs

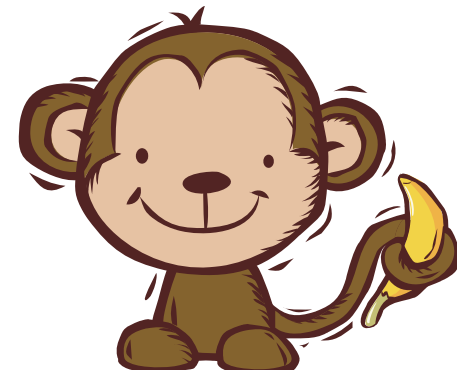
iii. Conclusion

- a) Summarise the key points
- b) Close the circle and point the way ahead



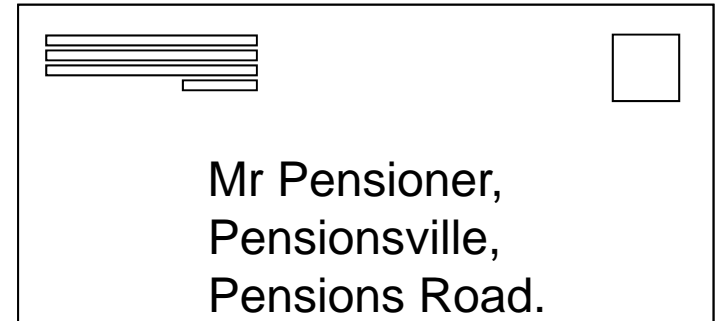
3. Relax and take your time

- Best advice: “The key to communication is showing a cool, relaxed outside even if you are really nervous on the inside”
- Speak professionally
- Be empathic and understanding
- Take your time between slides and be natural
- Don’t worry about little mistakes – not being examined on this
- Try to be confident, if 1 and 2 are correct, 3 will take care of itself...





The Letter ...



- Practice Formats
- Brief Sentences
- Follow structure of # 2 – high level answers – don't 'get stuck' in the detail
- 2/3 sentences should suffice to explain the key points required



The Presentation...



- Identify the audience and their needs
- Your presentation should easily cover key points and leave them satisfied
- Follow structure of # 2 – high level answers – don't 'get stuck' in the detail
- Ask yourself if you have met the overall objective at the end
- Simple slides, make sure they are well signposted
- Use graphs, tables, Clip Art (!)
- Talk slowly, do not rush to the next slide

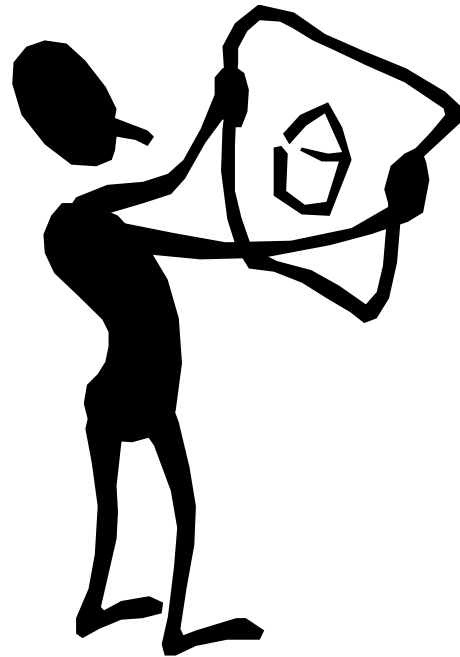


In General

- Jargon – would your family understand what it means?
- Practice time management especially for the presentation
- Drafting is vital but easier on a computer
- Watch Online Tutorials, study the advice, make notes, participate in online chats with others.
- Useful tip : Put in “Please visit www.furtherreading.com for more information”



Summary... 1, 2, 3...



QUESTIONS PLEASE !



Many thanks to:

- Des O'Sullivan
- Thomas Donohoe

- John Sheppard
- Sarah Hyland
- Gillian Tucker
- The Society (Mary, Yvonne, Emily, Catherine)