

Patent Examination Board

2023 Qualifying Examinations

PEB Governance Board's Response to the Candidate Survey

1. Introduction

There were no fundamental changes to the arrangements for candidates for the 2023 Qualifying Examinations. This was therefore a year of consolidation so far as the manner in which the assessments were provided.

There was, however, a change in administration of the examinations with an extra member of staff being employed. At the same time, the PEB started on the process of re-thinking the Final Diploma (FD) syllabi and re-designing the assessments, which was referred to in last year's response. This process of review started with FD4 and moved on to the other FD units.

In reviewing the FD syllabi and assessments, the PEB has considered both the recommendations of the Mercer Review and the views of candidates. The proposals for change will also go out to wider consultation. As a result, some of the changes that candidates have suggested might not be dealt with immediately, but will be reflected in the medium-term development of the Qualifying Examinations.

More specifically, the structure of this response has not changed from previous years. The outcomes of any changes made as a result of the previous year's action plan and the action plan for this year are set out in Appendices One and Two.

1.1 Response to the survey

The numbers of candidates who completed the survey showed a very small increase in that there were 173 responses compared to 169 in 2022. This is still below the level of responses in 2020 but nonetheless provides a useful evidence base for the PEB in considering how to refine and improve the arrangements for the assessments. The PEB is grateful to all of those candidates who took the time to respond for their generally constructive and helpful comments.

Whilst every comment that candidates have made has been considered, this response has sought to address the major themes and issues that have arisen. As a result, of necessity, not every matter that was raised will be dealt with in this report.

1.2 The overall picture

In general, the results for the administration of the assessments are largely in line with, if not improved from, last year. In particular, there were a number of positive comments concerning the examination and the administration. One candidate felt that "The system worked very well. Issues were sorted out by email swiftly and helpfully information sent in a timely manner." In a similar vein, another said that "Overall I think the PEB examinations are well run. There is of course already room for improvement but I am satisfied with the provisions in place."

This last comment reflects the overall ratings, which whilst generally positive raised some issues that candidates believed needed to be addressed. These include:

- Technical problems experienced using the software, specifically the drawing tool for FD2, together with delays in downloading or difficulties uploading
- Problems with emergency assistance during the examinations
- Changes in email addresses for PEBX from the trial to the actual exam caused confusion and stress
- Issues concerning invigilation, particularly some inconsistency between invigilators
- The system for warnings with respect to time
- The timing of the trial examination
- Requests for reasonable adjustments and special consideration
- The information provided to candidates
- The tone in examiner reports
- Given the difficulty of passing, offering exams more than once a year, to enable earlier retakes.

That aside, there were several issues raised with respect to the examinations themselves which resulted in a number of lower ratings than last year. These included:

- The content of the examinations with respect to the nature, volume and the range of topics which were considered
- The need to memorise finer details in a manner that didn't reflect how cases would be dealt with in practice
- The time allowed for the assessments
- In general, the difficulty of some assessments. Candidates felt that the examinations didn't reflect their fitness to practice.

The main issues raised by candidates will be discussed below either in general terms or in the context of the specific examination/area where the issue arose.

2. Technical issues

Whilst the report on the candidate survey notes that there were technical issues with the examination system, there were, aside from issues with the FD2 drawing tool, relatively few comments on this compared to previous years. This is reflected in the improved ratings for the following areas: "PEBx system was easy to use"; "overall ease of use of ProctorExam" and "Overall ease of use of Zoom."

As a result, it does not appear that issues relating to downloading and uploading were widespread. It therefore appears that they related to the speed and reliability of individual candidates' Wifi connections. Nonetheless, one candidate did note that "The PEBx system was very slow at 10am" whilst another commented that it took them several minutes to download the exam paper. Otherwise, one candidate had to restart their computer whilst another was logged out and then logged back in 30 seconds.

Whilst the PEB understands the concerns that such issues must have caused, it seems that these fortunately are relatively isolated incidents. Nonetheless the PEB will take these matters up with the examination system contractors.

2.1 The FD2 drawing tool

Unfortunately, the FD2 drawing tool does seem to have caused an increased number of problems this year with a higher number of candidates disagreeing with the statement that it was easy to use. One candidate commented that “The drawing tool for FD2 is an absolute nightmare. It’s a complete time sink and leaves you at a ridiculous disadvantage if you choose to use it instead of hand annotating drawings. I tried to use it and it took so long that I had to give up on labelling my figures.” Whilst other candidates expressed themselves in less forceful terms, they nonetheless raised similar concerns with respect to the amount of the time they took in using the tool.

This problem seems to have been exacerbated this year as a result of the numbers of figures involved, with candidates commenting that nine was too many. This was reflected by one candidate who indicated that “The word tool for figures in FD2 is clunky to use, and while it was OK last year, this year there were more detailed schemes to label which was incredibly frustrating.”

The PEB acknowledges the issues that have been raised by candidates and indeed took the steps outlined in last year's Action Plan (Appendix 1) to attempt to deal with this issue. The PEB gave candidates the choice of either using the drawing tool or hand annotating the diagrams. In addition, an example of the drawing tool was posted on the PEB website in June 2023 when registration for the examinations opened. Candidates therefore had the opportunity to practise using the tool if that was what they decided to use.

That being said, the PEB notes the concerns that candidates raised with respect to the numbers of figures that needed to be annotated this year. This is something that has been discussed with the relevant examiners with a view to removing the annotation requirement without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

3. Emergency assistance during the examination

A small number of candidates reported problems with the assistance available during the examinations. One indicated that “1. The emergency contact number is not readily accessible. It should be added to the first page of the essential information document in large font so that it can be quickly found. 2. The emergency phone line was not manned when I called.” Overall, there was a lower rating for the effectiveness of online help. The PEB will therefore review the support systems available during the examinations.

4. Changes in candidates' email addresses

Several candidates reported issues with different email addresses being used which caused difficulties for them when trying to login and access the paper on time. This was exemplified by one candidate who commented that “I was invited to sign up on my work email and used this to take part in the system test, however my exams were assigned to an account for my personal email address which I had not accessed. It would be helpful if perhaps we had a single login tied to our candidate number?”

Whilst the PEB recognises that issues might have arisen, candidates were emailed two weeks before the examinations started and asked to check that they could access the PEBX examination system with any email address they filled in on their online registration form. Candidates were then asked to contact the PEB immediately if they had any issues.

Unfortunately, a number of candidates did not do so until very late in the day which placed an extra burden on PEB staff who were assisting candidates. It should also be noted that the PEB can only use the email address that the candidate provided. This is made clear in the published Essential Information.

5. Invigilation

Some candidates raised issues relating to invigilation in the Zoom rooms including the warnings given as to when the examination would come to an end, which are dealt with in Section 6.

Other than warnings, candidates commented on some uncertainty relating to the start time with one indicating that “The invigilators were not clear when we could begin the exam, which meant I lost 10 minutes at the beginning of the exams. I assumed we could not start the exam until after the 10 minute printing/downloading period. These extra 10 minutes would have been extremely valuable for FD4.” With respect to the timing of the examinations, the PEB indicated that the examinations started at 10am in relevant documentation provided to candidates on the PEB website prior to the examinations. In particular, a time line for the examinations was provided on page 11 of the Technical Requirements document, which stated that candidates could begin working on their answers during the first 10 minutes' printing time. The timetable for the 2023 Qualifying Examinations was published at the beginning of April 2023. The candidates therefore had plenty of notice of the start time for the examinations.

That aside, some candidates asked if they could have been made aware in advance that they would be kept waiting before they entered the Zoom room so that they knew that there wasn't a fault in the system. Again, candidates are advised in the Technical Requirements document that they will be kept waiting in the Zoom room before the examination begins.

Lastly, a couple of candidates mentioned that the invigilators changed the host several times during the exam. As a result of this, the Zoom call window popped up in front of the Word window on several occasions. This stopped the candidates typing their answer and disrupted the flow of the assessment.

As to the changing of hosts, this was not reported to the PEB by any candidate or invigilator and it was not technically possible for the invigilator to change the host given the manner in which the examination Zoom meeting was set up.

Despite these concerns the ratings for Zoom invigilation have improved since 2022 for the overall ease of use of Zoom, the speed of invigilators' response and indeed the overall rating for the system. Indeed, this last measure showed that 84% of candidates rated the system overall as either good or very good.

6. Warnings

Concerns were raised with respect to the warnings given of the approach of the end of the examinations for both the Foundations and Finals examinations. One candidate commented that “I didn't receive a verbal or on screen warning for either the foundations or zoom. Luckily I was good at timekeeping but there is concern for others less aware”, whilst another noted that “I did not receive two on screen warnings, or if I did they are only visible in the browser which I of course did not have visible because I was writing my answer paper on a single

screen. Perhaps a better warning system.” As noted in the Technical Requirements document, the responsibility for managing their time is that of the candidate and they are advised to have a working traditional clock with them in the examination room. However, the PEB recognises the issues raised by candidates although it is difficult to investigate such matters if the PEB are not notified of them immediately after the examination.

Where candidates did receive warnings from the invigilators, there were concerns about the time at which such warnings were given with one candidate reflecting this when they stated “the information said a ten minute warning but invigilators gave a five min warning instead.” On the other hand, another candidate found this five minute warning to be somewhat intrusive in the final moments of an examination.

The PEB has investigated and has established that, in addition to the verbal warning that Zoom invigilators gave to Final Diploma candidates, all invigilators provided warnings in the "Chat" facility.

Candidates suggested solutions to these issues particularly for the Foundation examinations, where one suggested a verbal warning whilst another proposed a "pop up". Whatever approach is taken, one candidate summed up the views of others when they suggested “Make time warnings even more intrusive.”

In addition to the agreed warning that was prepared as a result of the 2022 Action Plan (Appendix 1), the PEB will consider whether a more intrusive and notable system can be implemented for the Finals examinations. However, this is not possible for Foundation examinations, given the constraints of the ProctorExam system. In addition, the PEB will review the documented Instructions for Invigilators and the training they receive with a view to re-emphasising the importance of time warnings.

7. Timing of the trial examination

Candidates did raise some concerns with respect to the trial of the examination system. Indeed, this was one of the areas where the level of satisfaction fell from last year, with a reduction in the ratings relating to Final feedback on the PEB candidate trials.

The main specific issues raised by candidates related to the flexibility of the trial with the following being representative of the comments from candidates:

- “PEB should make the PEBX system available outside of the limited trial window, as with the EQE Wiseflow system, which can be used to practice past papers at all times leading up to the exam. This would be a more inclusive practice - I had to do my trial with my baby in my lap which was not ideal.”
- “A longer trial examination period - only providing 2 hours in the middle of a work day is a bit limiting.”
- “Allow longer duration for trial session to cater to candidates not located in the UK (different timezone)”
- “Trial session should test the full extent of a mock exam session including an actual zoom connection. Otherwise, the trial for the finals candidate appears to be pointless beyond just connecting the PEBX system and may leave open questions for first time finals sitters.”

With respect to the organisation of the trial, the dates for it were published on the PEB website in June 2023 which was well in advance of the trial taking place. The PEB were also very flexible in allowing candidates to test the system on any of the scheduled trial days.

Zoom is a very popular application which is widely used and so this was intended to be a test of the PEBX system with which candidates might be unfamiliar. There was a Zoom connection link, but the PEB did not allow the candidates into the examination test room. In any event, the PEB did not receive any questions about the connectivity of the Zoom trial examination room after the FD trial.

Nonetheless, the PEB accepts the trials are an element of the preparation that is necessary for the assessment. The PEB therefore provides the trials at some significant cost in order to try to ensure that the candidates are comfortable with the system before taking the examinations. The PEB will therefore consider whether any further flexibility can be built into the trial in the manner that candidates have requested.

8. Requests for Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration

As noted in the report on the Candidate Survey, one candidate sought to link the trial of the system to the provision of reasonable adjustments by indicating that the PEB should:

“Either provide more than a single opportunity to test the system, or stop refusing adjustments/mitigation to candidates that did not participate in the technical test. By all means, let participation in the test be a factor which is taken into consideration when determining whether to award mitigation and how much, but it is not fair to refuse mitigation entirely on the basis of non-participation in a test that is scheduled during peak business hours on a weekday with no alternative dates or times provided.”

It should, however, be said that reasonable adjustments are never refused on the basis of the candidate not having attended the trial. Reasonable adjustments applications are considered against the evidence which is provided in support of the request and are processed some weeks before the trial examinations. Unfortunately, if insufficient or inadequate evidence is supplied, reasonable adjustments cannot be approved. It may be that this candidate's comment above was referring to special consideration, which can be requested following an examination. Non-attendance at a trial examination does not necessarily preclude special consideration being approved. As stated in the Special Consideration Policy and the Technical Requirements document, mitigation (special consideration) requests relating to unsuitable IT arrangements will not be approved if the candidate did not participate in the trial.

Aside from this specific concern, other candidates commented that the procedure for requesting reasonable adjustments could have been clearer, more accessible and dealt with further in advance of the assessment. In this regard, the PEB has recently published its policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and a Fair Access to Assessment Policy, which together take into account the sort of issues raised by the candidates and how they can best be dealt with.

9. The information provided to candidates

There were some comments from candidates concerning the clarity and ease of reference of some of the information that was provided to them. In particular, one candidate wanted “Clearer, less wordy instructions” whilst another suggested that there was “Too much information scattered around different sources, technical info, essential info, FAQs. The burden on the candidate to make sure they meet all technical requirements for the exam is

too high, particularly for candidates in small firms where there's no IT support available."

Whilst the PEB notes the suggestions that the candidates have made, the ratings given to the information provided by the PEB and the communications with PEB are generally very high and in certain important areas have improved on last year.

As it is, in issuing information to candidates, the PEB is seeking to ensure that most eventualities are covered in order to avoid candidates having to contact the PEB unnecessarily. There is also some combining of information already with, for example, the FAQs being in the Technical Requirements document. It is also worth noting on this point that the technology required for the assessments is not of a specialist nature and could be easily acquired from normal high street or online outlets.

On a related point, there has been a marked improvement this year in the rating for email communication with the PEB. Indeed, one candidate commented that "The administration team were incredible. My queries were answered quickly and, even though I moved firms and countries between registering and taking the exam, they were very helpful. Please let them know how grateful I am for the seamless change of address etc." Given the pressures that there are on the PEB staff, it is gratifying to see such praise for their efforts.

Although it is not possible to precisely isolate why this improvement has occurred, the additional member of staff who has been employed is likely to have contributed to this and relieved the burden on the existing staff.

One interesting aspect to the rating given on this point is that nearly a third of respondents indicated that they were unable to comment on the PEB response to email queries. The Candidate Survey report suggests that this is because a large number of candidates would not have needed to email the PEB. Again, this indicates that the information provided in the other documents was helpful and that the overall process was relatively easy for candidates to navigate.

10. The tone in examiners' reports

An aspect of communication that was raised by a couple of candidates was the tone of the examiners' reports. These two candidates were concerned that comments in the reports were abrasive, unhelpful and demoralising. In particular, candidates pointed to remarks which suggested that the reason for candidates not being successful in examinations was due to their lack of preparation rather than the structure of the papers themselves.

The PEB accepts that there are a number of reasons why candidates might not pass an assessment and is addressing the nature of the examinations in part to ensure that these do not form an unnecessary impediment to candidates progressing. That being said, in their reports, examiners have to offer an honest appraisal of the reasons why candidates didn't pass assessments. Whilst consideration is, and will continue to be, given to the language used by examiners in presenting their views, they have to give an analysis of candidates' performance in order to ensure that candidates are guided to the steps they need to take in order to pass the examinations.

11. Offering the examinations more than once a year

Several candidates suggested that it would be better if there was more than one opportunity to sit the examinations during the year. It was felt that this might be fairer particularly where

a candidate had an “off day” or was ill and had a wait another year to re-sit the examinations.

The PEB understands why candidates might suggest this but unfortunately it is not a feasible option. The question papers go through quality checks before the final version is reached.

There are also several elements to the marking process. Under the current arrangements for the PEB, it would not be possible for all these checks to take place if the examinations were sat more than once a year.

12. The question papers

12.1 Overview

As noted in Section 1, the PEB is currently undertaking a thorough review of the FD syllabi and methods of assessment. In doing so, it is drawing evidence and views from a wide variety of sources. The comments from candidates are an invaluable element of this review and will inform the nature of the examinations going forward particularly where ongoing themes are identified.

It is likely that there will be some changes to the assessment model for all four FD examinations for the 2025 session onwards

This year, the results of the candidate survey were something of a mixed bag with respect to the question papers. There were some positive and indeed slightly improved ratings for some Foundation papers. However, there were also some notable drops in levels of satisfaction with other papers, particularly FC2, FC5 and FD3. These papers all saw relatively large increases in the numbers of candidates who felt that they weren't given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

One reason for the slightly lower ratings seems to be the time allocated for the examinations with almost universally lower ratings for the question in the survey relating to whether candidates felt they had sufficient time to complete the paper. This was particularly the case for FD3. That aside, candidates commented on the volume and nature of the content of some papers.

The rather nuanced picture that emerges from the survey can be seen more clearly by considering each paper in turn.

12.2 The Foundation Certificate question papers

12.2.1 FC1

There were very few comments on this paper which received a generally positive rating from candidates. Indeed, one candidate indicated that “The Actavis question in FC1 was actually a very good example of a useful, practical question.” There were therefore no issues of note relating to this paper aside from a general concern about memorising matters which would be normally checked in practice (see the discussion in Section 12.2.2 on FC2).

12.2.2 FC2

The ratings for FC2 were lower than last year with respect to both timing and whether the paper allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge. Although there were relatively few comments on the paper, they were not positive.

The comments suggested that there were problems with the nature of the examination with one candidate indicating that “FC2 is a useless exam. The overwhelmingly vast majority of

attorneys will never use the knowledge they learn for FC2. In fact, it's against the code of conduct for them to use it.”

This view was echoed by another candidate who indicated that “I thought that the FC2 paper in particular focussed far too much on recall of exact wording/rule numbers for the IPREG code of conduct. This appears unnecessary, and was not communicated in the syllabus (in contrast to the rest of the English law paper which requires knowledge of the law rather than perfect recall).”

One candidate went further and suggested that “the exam should be scrapped entirely”.

The PEB notes the concerns expressed by candidates about this paper. With respect to the syllabus content, the PEB is, however, constrained by IPReg’s Accreditation Handbook which it has to meet in the assessments. In particular, IPReg’s Overarching Principles and the Code of Conduct have to be assessed.

That being said, the PEB notes the criticisms that have been made of the requirement to simply memorise large amount of content. Examiners have been advised to consider this when setting papers and where possible to look to set questions which test the application of the knowledge required in a practical sense.

12.2.3 FC3

Although there was a spread of ratings, the satisfaction with this paper improved at the higher end with over half of candidates indicating that the paper allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge a great deal or a lot.

That being said, there were a few comments on this paper which were exemplified by the candidate who indicated that “FC3 is largely a test of one’s ability to recall random facts (that would be looked up or checked with a foreign agent in real life). There were a large number of questions on this paper which were pure recall of such facts, and far fewer that actually rely on applying knowledge and understanding. I thought the other exam papers were fair.”

The PEB acknowledges the comments from candidates which, in line with the response above concerning FC2, will be considered by the examiners.

12.2.4 FC4

This paper received higher ratings than in 2022 and there were no comments in the survey concerning this paper.

12.2.5 FC5

The ratings for this paper were down on 2022. The background to why the ratings might have fallen in this way is suggested by one candidate who, in a manner representative of the other comments, stated that “In general the PEB exams are well written. Personally I believe the FC5 paper should be more formulaic given patent attorneys rarely, if ever, practice TM law. Part A FC5 questions directed to niche aspects of TM law seems deliberately cruel.”

As with FC2, the PEB notes the views that candidates have expressed but the content of the syllabus is specified in the IPReg Accreditation Handbook. Examiners will, however, take into account the comments from candidates as to the nature of the questions when setting the paper.

12.3 The Final Diploma question papers

12.3.1 FD1

The major issue with this paper was considered to be the limited spread of topics that were assessed, with a number of candidates commenting on this. One candidate summed up the views of their colleagues by suggesting that “A broader range of topics in FD1, rather than a few topics being raised in multiple questions would allow candidates to illustrate their breadth of knowledge and not penalise candidates who are well prepared in all but one topic.”

The PEB and the examiners will take note of this view when considering the content of future papers.

That aside, there were suggestions from candidates with respect to making this examination open book and splitting it up. These broader questions have been taken into account as part of the review of this and other papers.

12.3.2 FD2

The issues that candidates raised on this paper related to the question of the drawing tool which was discussed above. Thus one candidate commented that “overall the paper was okay, I thought the subject matter was interesting but accessible. However, 9 figures is just too much for the time limit.” Another candidate set this in the context of the relatively low number of marks that was available for this aspect of the paper. These views contributed to the lower rating for this paper on the question of whether candidates had sufficient time to complete it.

As mentioned above in Section 12.1, this is something that will be raised with the examiners concerned. It should, however, be noted that overall satisfaction with this paper was high with over 50% of candidates indicating that the paper allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge a great deal or a lot.

12.3.3 FD3

The ratings for this paper were notably worse than for 2022 although there were relatively few comments from candidates given the size of the drop in ratings for the paper. The issues concerning the paper seem, however, to be relatively clear.

One candidate commented that “The FD3 paper was too long - the number of pages to read and apply in the time frame felt unachievable” whilst another felt that “FD3 was markedly harder than previous years.” One candidate suggested that the changes to the paper might have had an impact by noting that “changes to the exam are understandable, but when the exam follows a formula and this changes unexpectedly, people are taken by surprise”

Whilst the question paper did meet the syllabus, the PEB accepts the concerns expressed by candidates. The examiners are aware of those concerns which will be taken into account when future papers are set. At the same time, candidates should not expect that the papers will follow the same pattern every year.

12.3.4 FD4

As in previous years, FD4 is the examination which attracted most comment from candidates with some of the major themes from previous years – particularly timing – again being an issue this year. There were, however, some specific points concerning the content of the paper which were raised by candidates.

Before considering these points in more detail it is worth noting that there were slight improvements in some of the ratings for the paper this year.

With respect to timing, the ratings given by candidates suggest that this was a more pronounced problem this year. This was even the case for candidates who were otherwise happy with the paper overall. One candidate therefore commented “To avoid any doubt, I'm in favour of this exam and the style in which it is set. However, there is simply not enough time to provide a fully considered response.”

The impact on candidates was summed up by one candidate who noted that “the time pressure is very severe: there may be just enough time to complete the paper, but there is not enough time to check things over, or to really think properly about the answers. The race against the clock becomes the dominant feature of the exam, rather than the proper application of practice skills.”

What seems to have exacerbated the time issue this year was the content of the paper. There were various aspects to this. One candidate commented that the “FD4 question paper was far too long at 18 pages. It was impossible to finish under the time pressure.” In addition, the nature of the content also seems to have been problematic with one candidate stating that they “Personally felt the FD4 paper had one too many claims to do the exam justice in the time limit.” These issues led one candidate to suggest that “The subject matter of the patent having two hugely contrasting embodiments seemed a bit too obscure to be really testing fitness to practice, because in such a situation in real life much more time would be taken”

It should be said that candidates made constructive suggestions as to how the paper could be improved. These included allowing more time for the paper, cutting down the content, changing the format, for example to a form of course work, and splitting the paper.

The comments and proposals that candidates have made in this and previous years are very helpful to the PEB in designing the new iteration of FD4. Indeed, some of the points that candidates have raised in the candidate surveys have directly informed the PEB's thinking on the design of the new assessment. There will, however, be an ongoing process and the PEB and the examiners will seek to reflect the specific comments that candidates made this year in future assessments.

13. Conclusion

The PEB would like to thank all of the candidates that have responded to the survey this year. Candidates largely engaged with the survey in a positive and helpful manner. There were therefore a lot of thoughtful and constructive comments. These will feed into the PEB's review of the syllabi and assessments and will hopefully contribute to an improved experience for candidates in future examinations.

Appendix 1

2022 Action Plan

Area (please specify)	Candidate feedback	Rationale for decision	Change implemented	Impact on candidate experience (updated following 2023 examinations)
Warnings about time during the assessment	Candidates commented that they were unable to see the warnings given by the PEBX system and that there was a lack of consistency in the warnings given by invigilators	To help candidates ensure that they finish the examination on time and upload their papers before the cut-off point ("End of Upload time")	The PEB will consult with candidates about the nature and timing of warnings to be given. Once a decision has been reached on this the instructions to invigilators will be changed to reflect this decision and will include a precise form of words that each invigilator should use.	Although there was action taken on the precise form of words to be used, there appears to have been inconsistency in the timings of some of the warnings. For FC examinations the visibility of warnings on the PEBX system is affected by the constraints of the ProctorExam system. Issue to be included in 2023 Action Plan
Trial of the system	The candidates wanted a trial of the Zoom system so that they were fully aware of the arrangements before they sat the assessment	To try to ensure that candidates know exactly what the system is before they attempt the assessment so the experience is less stressful for them.	The PEB will provide a more detailed explanation of the Zoom invigilation system in the Technical Requirements document issued before the examinations. A member of the Informals will write a piece about their experience of the Zoom invigilation system as a candidate in 2022.	The nature of the trial was not a major issue in the 2023 examinations.

Invigilation	Candidates wanted better and more timely assistance from invigilators during the exam. They also wanted invigilators to ensure there was no external noise by muting other candidates	To provide better support for candidates during the examination and ensure they are not disturbed.	The PEB will review the training that it is given to invigilators. It will also amend the instructions for invigilators where necessary.	This does not appear to have been a major issue in the 2023 examinations.
Annotation tools for FD2	Candidates expressed concerns about the difficulty in using the annotation tools in FD2 and were uncertain about the alternative arrangements that the PEB had suggested	To ensure that candidates do not lose time dealing with such issues.	The PEB will review the Technical Requirements document to provide clearer information on the annotation tools and the alternatives to using the tools.	The PEB took a number of steps in line with the Action Plan (see the body of the response). However, this still appears to be an issue in 2023. Issue to be included in 2023 Action Plan

Appendix 2

2023 Action Plan

Area (please specify)	Candidate feedback	Rationale for decision	Change implemented	Impact on candidate experience (to be updated following 2024 examinations)
Annotation tools for FD2	Candidates expressed concerns about the time taken when using the annotation tools in FD2 particularly given the number of figures in the examination	To ensure that candidates do not lose time dealing with such issues	The PEB has reviewed the use of the annotation tool and discussed it with the relevant Principal Examiner. There will be no requirement to annotate as the figures will be pre-labelled for candidates	
The PEBX system	Candidates experienced difficulties with different email addresses being used to login to the system	To try and ensure that there is no confusion about which email might be used by candidates to access the system	The PEB will email candidates before the examinations to check their email address that they will use to access to the PEBX system	
Support during examinations	Candidates experienced difficulties accessing support during the examinations	To ensure that candidates who experience problems during the examinations are not unduly disadvantaged	Candidates will be issued with detailed information concerning the support that is available to them	
Invigilation	Candidates experienced problems in the assessment	To ensure candidates are not unnecessarily interrupted during the assessment	The PEB will check and review the instructions to invigilators	