ATT welcome

Welcomes

07 June 2021

Necessity is the mother of invention

As I write this Welcome page, we are in the middle of our exam session for the May 2021 sitting.

This year our students will not travel to city centres to sit their exams, often leaving before the crack of dawn to ensure that they arrived on time. It is all a much more civilised affair, with students sitting the exams online, at a location of their choice, often in their own homes using a system called Exam4.

After the inevitable cancellation of the examination session in May 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have worked hard to accelerate our plans to move the examinations online to ensure that our students can study, safe in the knowledge that they will have the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned at the end of their courses. Our education team has done a fantastic job in ensuring that not only were the systems in place but that the exams have passed off smoothly, with 1,179 candidates sitting 2,354 papers in November and approximately 1,900 papers being sat at the May sitting.

With all exam preparation courses currently held online, our current students are in a unique position of being able to study and practice in the environment in which they will sit their real examination.

And as society begins the long transition back to normality, many students will continue with online courses, avoiding the need for long commutes and giving themselves more time to study. But some will prefer being together with other students and will return to a physical classroom environment.

The pandemic has forced many organisations to review the way they do things and to take risks to develop things that they would not have done in normal times. Many

of those changes will bring enduring benefits – as Plato said, ‘necessity is the mother of invention’.

My sincere gratitude to Simon Groom, our Vice President elect, for bringing me up to speed on how our exams have adapted in the face of the pandemic, and how they may also have been improved for our new students. And thank you too, to our education team for their continuing hard work.

If you missed it, there was a wonderful webinar on 13 May ‘Connecting with Nature – mental health and well-being in the tax profession’ to coincide with the UK’s Mental Health Awareness Week. The matter of mental health is nothing new and the problems have always been bubbling below the surface before Covid-19.

If anything, the pandemic may have helped bring this issue out in the open.

I recall an advert on television many years ago about this matter. It focused on a young person, out socialising with friends, playing sports and generally enjoying life. The advert ended with the young person arriving at their own home alone and removing their ‘outside’ face – they were pretending to the outside world that all was well with them.

The moral? We should not accept that anyone is OK at face value; we should check that they are genuinely coping with the complexities and difficulties of life. Who knows, maybe both parties would stand to gain from that interaction?

You will be aware that Members volunteer their time to ensure that ATT remains in a strong position to represent students and Members. We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, be they long established Members or recently qualified, who would be willing to bring their thoughts and experience (we are not saying that you need to have years of experience!) to help ATT. Those volunteers will help to shape the ATT of the future and ensure that ATT remains a highly respected professional tax qualification.

June sees Volunteers’ Week 2021 and it would be wonderful if any Members could find a little bit of free time to devote to helping ATT. If you have any interest or inclination to volunteer, ordinarily I would recommend that you speak with the Chair of your local Branch. As all face-to-face meetings remain suspended, might I suggest you use the email address below? I can assure you that we do monitor it daily.

I will leave you on that note and wish you a wonderful (and safe) Summer break.

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