

## SOA e-Learning Discipline Information

In 2008, the Society of Actuaries (SOA) identified several instances of plagiarism and other improper conduct in the SOA e-Learning system. While most plagiarism and other improper conduct occurred on the Fundamentals of Actuarial Practice (FAP) End-of-Module exercise submissions, improper collaboration and collusion were also identified on the FAP Interim and Final Assessments. Types of infractions included copying word-for-word portions of the FAP or FSA End-of-Module exercise model solutions and improperly collaborating and/or colluding on the Interim and Final Assessments. An example of improper conduct is submitting unrelated documents in place of the required assignments. The candidates who violated the [Terms and Conditions Agreement for e-Learning Candidates](#) by plagiarizing their e-Learning submissions or by submitting unrelated documents were disciplined.

The SOA responded promptly to the infractions with the formation of a Plagiarism Task Force, the selection and implementation of sophisticated plagiarism detection software programs and the deployment of e-Learning system enhancements to deter plagiarism and other improper conduct. Additionally, in an effort to effectively communicate the SOA's expectations related to plagiarism and other improper conduct, the SOA released a 30-minute mandatory Honesty & Integrity module in June 2010.

The Honesty & Integrity module:

- Contains articles and an audiocast from key SOA leaders.
- Defines plagiarism, collaboration and collusion.
- Describes several actual e-Learning discipline cases and associated outcomes.
- Provides examples of how to properly cite sources.
- Describes how to act with honesty and integrity when completing e-Learning modules.
- Describes the SOA discipline process as it pertains to e-Learning courses.
- Reviews the SOA e-Learning Terms and Conditions Agreement for e-Learning Candidates.
- Reviews the SOA Code of Conduct for Candidates.

### **2008-2010 Discipline Cases – Infractions, Penalties and Appeals**

Based on over 25,000 e-Learning submissions from 2008-2010, 359 candidates have been part of the discipline process.

- FAP and FSA End-of-Module Exercises only – 255 candidates
- FAP Interim Assessment only – 35
- FAP Final Assessment only – 51
- FAP Exercises and Interim Assessment – 4
- FAP Exercises and Final Assessment – 7
- FAP Interim and Final Assessment – 4
- FAP Exercises, Interim Assessment and Final Assessment and FSA Exercises – 3

The penalties issued (keeping in mind that some may change due to pending appeals) are:

- Warning – 84
- One-year ban – 136
- Two-year ban – 72
- Three-year ban – 1
- Five-year ban – 8
- Lifetime ban – 3
- Other ban - 5
- Penalty overturned on appeal – 37
- Case dropped – 13 candidates

A ban means the candidate has the particular exercise or assessment disqualified and is prohibited from completing that exercise or assessment as well as further modules, exercises, assessments or examinations for the indicated period. In general, bans are longer for assessments than for exercises and are also longer for repeat or multiple infractions.

Of these 359 candidates, 150 elected to appeal the SOA discipline decision. At the time of this publishing, the status of some of these appeals was:

- Pending – 8 candidates
- Appeal denied and penalty upheld – 96
- Appeal denied, but ban reduced – 5

It is important to note that 34 of the candidates had been granted ASA designations based on exercises or assessments for which they no longer have credit. **As a result, their ASA designations were revoked.**

### **Removal of Designation**

If a candidate has received an ASA or FSA designation or CERA credential based on having passed an exercise or assessment, and that exercise or assessment is subsequently disqualified, then the designation is revoked. If a disqualification occurs, the candidate has no longer met the education requirements for that designation and is prohibited from using it.

If the disqualification was for a jointly-sponsored activity, the SOA informs the joint sponsors (such as the Casualty Actuarial Society and Canadian Institute of Actuaries) of the discipline enacted. These organizations are free to enforce their own discipline, as they deem appropriate.

### **Confidentiality**

The SOA does not release detailed information about past or pending discipline cases. Employers seeking to confirm the membership status of an employee are encouraged to search the [SOA Online Directory](#) or contact the SOA [Customer Service department](#).

Though the overall percentage of plagiarism in the e-Learning system remains low, the SOA has a responsibility to all candidates, members and employers to maintain its strict standards, uphold a zero

tolerance for cheating and demand candidate honesty and integrity in order to preserve the value of the SOA designation. Actuaries are known for their professionalism – the highest ethical standards and therefore the value of professionalism cannot be overstated.

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