

Actuality

Macquarie Actuarial Yearbook

2002



assoc

Actuarial Students Society at Macquarie University

Yearbook 2002

Editorial / Production Team:

Prashan Karunaratne
Allen Juang
Steven Ye

Contributors:

Allen Golubovic
Allen Juang
Ben Lau
Ben Poon
Darren Ma
Faro Mok
James Wang
Jeff Chen
Joshua Tan
Michael Lip
Michael Zheng
Prashan Karunaratne
Rosanna Lam
Simon Theresia
Steven Ye
Sussan Lam
Tony Do
William Loc
Yi-Nan Wang

From the outgoing President

A Moment of Reflection

Remember three years ago, on a slightly showery March morning, a first year Macquarie University Actuarial Studies student was strolling along the pavement in the university courtyard, trying to get his head around the maze of clubs and societies stalls sprawling around him. Upon hearing the words "Actuarial Students' Society", he stopped in front of a stall which best can be described as simple.

Perched over the stall stand, a lively chap with the name Wesley Chan inscribed on his tag was trying to convince a few new actuarial students to join the society. Out of curiosity, the aforementioned first year student walked up to the stand and put his name down on the application form, not knowing this would have a quite significant impact in his future uni life. That student was me.

For those who can remember, three years ago ASSOC was a fairly under resourced organization ran by only a handful of dedicated students, which included Wesley Chan, Bobby Leung, Gerard Ho, Eunice Mok and Shane Ewen just to name a few. These forbearers had not just maintained the over all function of the society, but more importantly under their initiative, ASSOC embarked on a journey of rejuvenation and expansion.

When the new management team took up responsibility late in 2001, I, along with many other dedicated colleagues felt the full weight of our responsibilities and the challenges that faced us, but we were not hesitant to offer our effort and time in the pursuit of a professional and united ASSOC. What followed was a period of great changes for ASSOC, which included the introduction and expansion of many new projects and initiatives, the broadening of our sponsor base and the strengthening of the Macquarie-UNSW actuarial students' relationship. All of these had turned ASSOC into one of the largest and best organized student societies on campus. No one can remain static when the rest of the world is evolving, ASSOC is no exception. However, our primary focus on the service of Actuarial Students will always remain as the core value of this wonderful organization. On behalf of all "ASSOCers" past and present, I would like to urge all Macquarie Actuarial Students to continue to support YOUR society, because you are the very person whom we are trying to service!

After being involved with ASSOC for the past three years, I would like to announce my official resignation from the position of the President. I would like to use this article to thank all of those who had worked with me in ASSOC; if it is not for your unwavering friendship and selfless dedication, ASSOC will not be in its form today. I also felt it is very important to acknowledge the

strong support that ASSOC has received from the Department of Actuarial Studies at Macquarie, I have no doubt that ASSOC will continue to assist the Department in providing services to students into the future.

I would also like to congratulate Sussan Lam who is taking over the position of President, Simon Theresia who is the new Vice-President, Rossana Lam who is the new Secretary, Faro Mok who assumes the position of Treasurer and all other new members of the ASSOC Executive Council and Presidential Office. I have full confidence in all of you in making ASSOC a better society in the year 2003.

Finally, I would like to thank you, the actuarial students at Macquarie, for your continued support of ASSOC. It has been a great honour to serve you all for the past three years. Please remember that every membership, every attendance of ASSOC events, every readership of the *Actualite*, every student whose career was launched with the assistance of ASSOC all adds fuel to the blazing torch that is the ASSOC spirit, which shall shine far into the future.

Cheers,

Yi-Nan Wang

Financial Report

ASSOC Financial Report for the year ending 31st December, 2002.

The Actuarial Students' Society of Macquarie University is a non-profit organisation run by actuarial students. All works done within the organisation are entirely voluntary in nature, the common aim of all students who are involved in ASSOC is to provide services that benefit all actuarial students and its sponsors. The true value of the services ASSOC provides cannot be fully measured in dollars and cents. ASSOC has a group of dedicated and enthusiastic delegates and executive team members who sacrifice many hours of potential study-time to organise all the services it provides. Even though it is difficult to put a monetary value of the contributions made by the people of ASSOC, this report would like to acknowledge their work and efforts. As Treasurer, I personally view the dedication of my fellow ASSOC colleagues as the true measure of ASSOC's success.

Profit / Loss

ASSOC made a net loss of \$1564.44 for the year ending 31st December, 2002. This was due to unforeseen losses mainly from the JASS Annual Dinner and the printing of the 2001 Yearbook 'Actuality'. As a non-profit organisation, this is unhealthy for

ASSOC. ASSOC will attempt to remedy these problems in 2003.

Revenues

The commercial reality of today's society means any organisation requires money to function, and ASSOC is no exception. ASSOC sources its funds from two parties: the members and sponsors.

Membership fees collected from stalls during O-Week contributed \$1634.10 to ASSOC revenue.

ASSOC is very fortunate to have a number of very committed sponsors. It is because of these firms' generous support of ASSOC that it as a student society continue to grow and excel. Sponsorship contributed \$6250.00 to ASSOC revenue.

ASSOC would like to thank the following organisations;

☞ *PriceWaterhouse Coopers*, ASSOC's major sponsor for their general sponsorship and event-specific sponsorship of the PwC Cup Soccer Competition, ASSOC/ASOC Basketball Competition, PwC Bushwalk and the ASSOC Welcome BBQ

☞ *Commonwealth Bank of Australia Financial Services* for their sponsorship of the annual Meet the Professional's Night

☞ *QED Actuarial* for their sponsorship for the QED Careers Night

- ☞ *Tillinghast-Towers Perrin* for their sponsorship of our quarterly magazine, *The Actualite*
- ☞ *The Institute of Actuaries of Australia* for their sponsorship of the JASS Annual Dinner
- ☞ *Classic Solutions* for their sponsorship of the JASS Annual Dinner
- ☞ *Zurich* for their sponsorship of the JASS Annual Dinner
- ☞ *The Actuarial Department of Macquarie University* for their sponsorship of the Share Market Game
- ☞ *SAM Union* for their general financial support of Macquarie University student societies.

ASSOC has a strong balance sheet with reserves in excess of \$2000.00. Justification for these reserves can be seen by this year's large financial loss.

ASSOC has a strong record of continuous revenue growth due to its dynamic initiatives in securing new sponsorship agreements.

Looking to the future, ASSOC will continue to expand its product base and hopefully ally itself with more organisations. ASSOC will also remove the membership fees for renewing members. This is a benefit ASSOC can provide due to the diligent efforts of its people in finding new sponsors and their ability to run events more efficiently.

Expenses

As a non-profit organisation, ASSOC returns all of its revenues to relevant parties as benefits.

The majority of ASSOC expenses went into the hiring of venues, equipment and professional services for various important events. For example, the JASS Annual Dinner which was the single biggest expenditure item on the ASSOC calendar, required the hiring of a ball room at the Four Points by Sheraton and the services of catering, DJ etc.

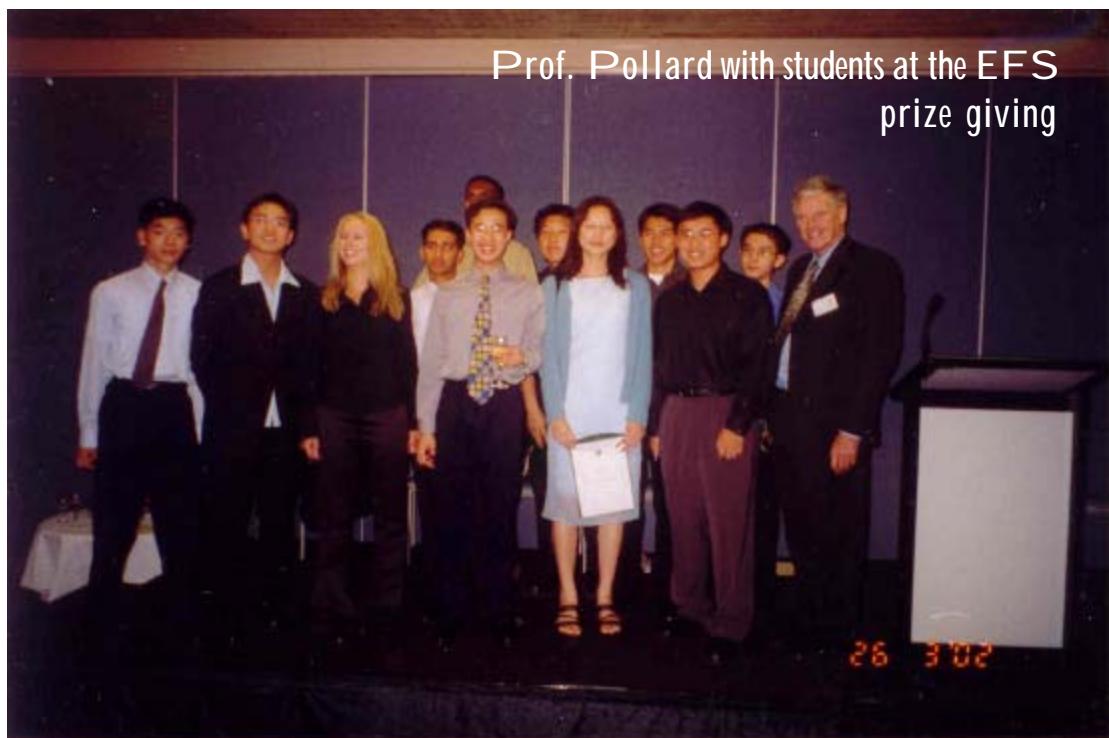
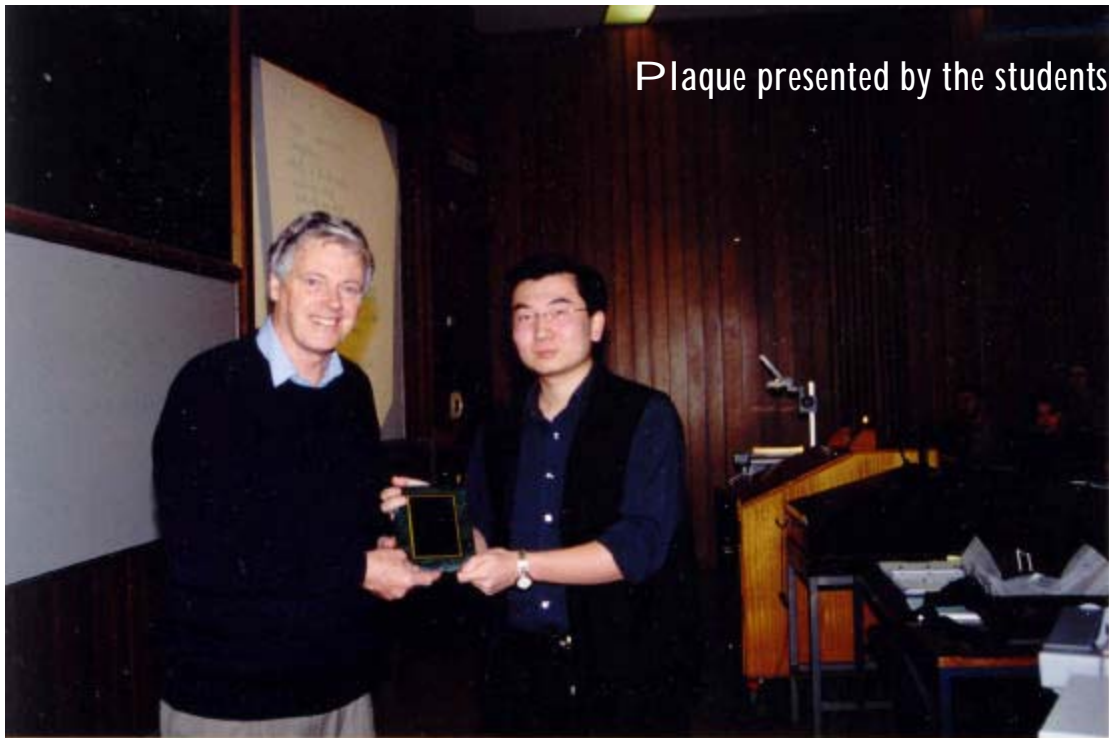
2002 expenses included;

- ☞ 2001 Yearbook 'Actuality' : \$1250.00
- ☞ Welcome BBQ : \$408.24
- ☞ Recurring expenses - IT and website (www.mqassoc.org) costs, membership cards : \$398.00
- ☞ Extraordinary expenses - ASSOC banner, Mr. Pollard's parting gifts : \$309.80
- ☞ ACST211 Prize : \$100
- ☞ Major events organised by ASSOC – QED Careers Night, Basketball and Soccer Competition, Bush Walk, SMG, Meet the Professionals Night, Actualite, Annual Dinner : \$6987.50

If you would like to confirm the 2002 financial figures, please consult me at stheresia@mqassoc.org and I will gladly resolve any genuine concerns.

Simon Theresia

Farewell Prof. Pollard



Class of 2002

A aliya Khan	Anthony Phan	Chris Young
Aaron Liang	Anthony Wijyaratna	Christina Fung
Aaron Lloyd-Jones	Anthony Wong	Christine Wang
Abhijeet Agarwal	Anuj Goel	Christopher Bourke
Adrian Korbelt	Anujan Dharmalingam	Christopher Butel
Adrian Woo	Ararat Abrahamian	Christopher Collins
Ahilan Nandapalan	Arthur Dann	Christopher Conway
Aijuan Wang	Ashish Aryal	Christopher Davis
Aik-Tim Heng	Aya Ozawa	Christopher Webb
Alan Zhao	Azib Khan	Chunhou Seah
Albert Cheng	Baron Nie	Claymore Marshall
Alen Golubovic	Becky Kwan	Conghui Wen
Alex Marshall	Bei Sun	Damon Paisley
Alexander Gale	Benjamin Lau	Dan Zhou
Alexander Micalizzi	Benjamin Poon	Daniel Archibald
Alexander Willoughby	Betty Chan	Daniel Butt
Alfred Au	Bin Lin	Daniel Cooper
Alfred Tran	Bin Wang	Daniel Fung
Alice Chui	Bindavi Rachakonda	Daniel Jones
Alisha Jones	Bo Wang	Daniel Keating
Allen Juang	Bom Suk Choi	Daniel Ku
Amy Kok	Bonnie Ip	Daniel Lam
An Pham	Bonnie Tong	Daniel Lin
Anastassia Kremenskaia	Boon Choon Teoh	Daniel Neylan
Andrea Cook	Bradley Butler	Danielle Jepson
Andrew Doughman	Brian Chu	Danny Zhang
Andrew Hordern	Catherine Ajaka	Daqian Wang
Andrew Huang	Cathy Chen	Darren Ma
Andy Hui	Cathy Wu	David Cartwright
Angel Lau	Chantal Hillman	David Chung
Angela Hui	Charbel Chahine	David The
Angelo Bastianpillai	Chi Hang Choy	Dennis Mosolov
Anny Ma	Chi Man Law	Dion Oryzak
Anthony Jones	Chi Van	Dominic Lo
Anthony Kim	Chi Wai Mak	Dominic Roe
Anthony Mathews	Chris Chan	Echo Huang

Edward Brown	Hong Tien How	Jon Harwood
Edward Hung	Huayuan Li	Jonathan Chan
Elaine Pang	I an Lo	Jonathan Clarkson
Emily Watchorn	I an Pang	Jonathan Ng
Emily Xin	I van Hung	Jonathan To
Emma Pollard	I van I swanto	Jong-Kil Wang
Emma Schumacher	Jack Chen	Joseph Kim
Eugene Herlianto	Jacky Ng	Joseph Lau
Eunice Mok	Jacob Ronowicz	Joshua Gan
Evan Wang	Jacob Rosenberg	Joy-Lyn Sue
Eve Cai	Jacobus Hattingh	Jun Song
Faheem Bhuiyan	Jacqueline Mok	Jung Hwa Yoo
Fanra Arief	James Vernon-Payne	Ka Hei Cho
Faro W C Mok	James Wang	Ka Kwok
Fatt Khai Chang	Jason Cheong	Kah Hon Leung
Fei Chen	Jason Huang	Kai Fung
Fei Yu	Jason Yeung	Kai Lok Jason Chan
Fen Guo	Jau Tan	Kaiser Lock
Fiana Seo	Jeff Feng	Kar Wang Kelvin Ng
Fong Chan	Jeffrey Chen	Karandeep Chadha
Fu Ken Ly	Jennifer Yong	Kate Pigram
Gabriel Lai	Jeremy Tang	Katelyn Priester
Gabrielle Ko	Jessica Chen	Kathleen Kong
Gagandeep Grewal	Jia Wang	Kay Sumiran
Garley So	Jiajin Huynh	Kei Cheng
Garth Brooker	Jian Ming Fang	Kenneth Ghi
Gigi Cheung	Jiapei Ho	Kenneth Tsui
Gilbert Cheng	Jia-Yi Xu	Kevin Chi
Gregory Cheung	Jiesha Hu	Kevin Kuo
Guan Jiang	Jing Qu	Khara Shaw
Haenim Kim	Jocelyn Lee	Kin Chan
Hai-Yan Huang	John Baik	Kitty Shui
Hakop Pashayan	John Bay	Kok Hau Leung
Hattie Tang	John Chan	Kwan Lo
He Zhang	John Chik	Lauren Smith
Hendry Lukman	John Kan	Lee Smith
Henry Wei	John Nguyen	Lester Grantham
Hoang Nguyen	John Tu	Li Peng
Hoi Wong	John Ye	Li Woei Ng

Lian Sim See	Nelson Vasconcelos	Saminda Padmasekara
Lin Chua	Nesanthan Sriandarajah	Sandeep Gupta
Lin Zheng	Nguyen Le	Sandeep Lala
Lindsey Chapman	Nicholas Barrett	Sandra Thompson
Lisa Chew	Nicholas Jeha	Sarah Jabeen
Luke Reid	Nicholas Stolk	Scott Ellis
Lulu Wang	Nicholas Vorobieff	Scott Olsson
Mark Kruger	Nicholas Wilkinson	Sen Sen Chen
Mark Reid	Nicole Edwards	Seng Phy
Mark Tran	Omar Hong	Senthu Paramaguru
Marvin Tang	Patricia Gacis	Sethunya Molosiwa
Maryam Ebrahimi	Patrick Jung	Shaini Sivagnanam
Matthew Floyd	Patrick Wang	Shannon Lin
Matthew Geekie	Paul Artale	Shao-Qing Zhang
Matthew Hall	Paul Emanuel	Sharon Jia
Matthew Judd	Peter Choi	Sherman Wong
Matthew Turner	Peter Wienand	Shi Qi Chen
Mehmet Ogut	Philip Nguyen	Simon Brailey
Mehran Redjvani	Philip Pang	Simon Byrne
Mei Jiang	Phuong Loi	Simon Guthrie
Michael Chung	Pote Supromajakr	Simon Ho
Michael Lau	Prameet Jamnadas	Simon Theresia
Michael Lip	Prashan Karunaratne	Simone Johnson
Michael Madani	Preeya Lakhani	Sing Chen Cheung
Michael Zheng	Qi Yang	Siyao Jiang
Min Oh	Qing Wang	Sohrab I rannejad
Minh Hieu Tran	Rachael Elston	Sonal Yadav
Mohamad Jebara	Rajgopal Iyengar	Sonia Ramdev
Monika Mukerji	Ren Bin Lin	Soon Chin
Moses Thangasamy	Revsion Tam	Stephen Ellison
Mosimanegape Molefi	Rhys Dewar	Stephen Gold
Mumtaz Moujoodh	Richard Lo	Stephen Lee
Myung-Hae Yu	Richard Loi	Stephen Suh
Nadeesha Viswakula	Robert Street	Steve Farag
Napat Srirussamee	Rohan Best	Steven Ye
Natalia Ady	Rong Ci Yang	Sujitha Thavapalachandran
Nathan Mclean	Rosanna Lam	Suk Chan
Naveen Patney	Rui Zhu	Sussan Lam
Navneet Kumar	Rupeng Chen	Suzanne Vo

Swati Bansal	Verinder Badhni	Xavier Lo
Sze-Ah Lee	Victor Chung	Xi Pan
Tan Pham	Vikki Wong	Xi Shi
Taposh Ahmed	Vincent Ng	Xianghe Huang
Teresa Tu	Vithiyarubhen <small>Jeyanandarajah</small>	Xiao Jun Fiona Li
Terry Jong	Vivian Chen	Xiao Lee
Theresa Le	Vivian Zhao	Xiao Ou Lu
Thuy Dam	Vivien Wang	Yang Wu
Thuy Truong	Wai Chui	Yao Li
Ti Ti Chen	Wai-Kuen Chan	Yao Song
Timothy Macready	Wallace Lee	Yashica Nagpaul
Timothy Spiteri	Wan Chiun Low	Yeow Shen Cheong
Timothy Wong	Wan Wei Lim	Yi Fan Fu
Tina Haung	Warren Yuen	Yi Wang
Tipiwa Mabutho	Wei Chen	Yi Zhou
Todd Campbell	Wei Song	Yick Sun Chan
Tony Dang	Weiqiao Wang	Yi-Fei Bian
Tony Do	Wen Zhuo Cao	Yifei Pan
Tony Jarick	Wendy Fu	Yin Yin Hou
Tony Tsai	Wenguan Wei	Yining Jiang
Tony Vuong	Wenjie Zhu	Yoke Keen Mak
Tran Nguyen	Wenqing Shi	Yoon Ooi
Troy Dodd	William Chan	Yu Lin
Trudy Ho	William Loc	Yuan Lin
Trully Safar	William Mak	Yu-Ting Huang
Trung Nguyen	William Tsoi	Yvonne Chu
Tyron Wong	Wilson Chan	Zaher Chamsine
Uma Joshi	Wing Lam	Zhaonan Yin
Varun Sablok	Winifred Lin	Zhiyi Ling

First Year

With the blazing sun right above us, the heat seemed to melt us all away. I looked at where I was standing, only to realise that I've moved 15 metres from where I stood half an hour ago. Time was crawling... and my legs were aching. I made a quick glance ahead, only to vision the blurred image of a line fading into the horizon of C5C. This was enrolment day. Undoubtedly... it's an unforgettable experience. Aren't we a bunch of lucky first years?

There's no better way to explain our transition from high school to uni than the picture of the fish on our diaries. Surely you can remember that orange fish... Well, if you've ever tried changing the water from a fish tank, you'll notice how the fish shivers... and then, suddenly adapts to the new surrounding. Essentially, that's what happened to us all. A shudder rather than a shiver, and then... all is good.

Sitting in the ACST151 lecture theatre, our dream to become an actuary started to realise. Remember the coin throwing simulation we did? That was the first taste of being any actuary and one that we will never forget. Throughout the year, we all gradually learnt to *conveniently* miss lectures and tutorials for various reasons. However, more significantly, we all formed our own "*brain* groups", ready to tackle any assignments that we receive. Lastly, the only thing just

as memorable to the farewell of our beloved Professor Pollard from ACST151 is... the ice chilled air conditioning in C5C-T1.

So did we all find ourselves a nice spot to settle between the lectures? ERIC seemed to be the most loved place for a bewildered group that seemingly revolved around it whenever lost. For others that preferred more excitement than the past papers offered by ERIC, the pool tables at the Bar were in constant action. Some preferred to build up their muscles, rather than brain cells by going to the gym, which is of course perfectly understandable. The remaining shy ones drifted away into the Library, whether to sleep, or to be lost among the shelves of books, I do not know. Nevertheless, we all found a place.

I can still vigorously recall the first ASSOC event that was organised, the QED Careers Forum. It was met with an overwhelming support from us, as we all went for the unlimited food offered. However, some actually went to see what lies in their future, which is... great. Not only did ASSOC provide insights to our Career paths, they also arranged sporting competitions, which were highly popular, such as the basketball and soccer competitions with our "*fellow rivals*", UNSW. Naturally, we won all of them. Lastly, and most importantly, the JASS Annual Dinner needs to be mentioned. Being the biggest and most

prosperous event ASSOC held, the atmosphere on the night was simply exhilarating. I just have to say... some people showed off their dancing skills, while others (which I found very funny indeed) just jumped up and down to fit in among the crowd. Nevertheless, I'll say we all had fun, and without doubt, it was an unforgettable night for everyone.

The 2002 first years contained mixed emotions. For some, this ranged from excitement to thrill, last minute cramming to near mental breakdowns, trauma to joy, and the list continues... Overwhelmingly, and most certainly, I'm confident to say... it has been a great year for us all.

Cheers, fellow students!

May we meet again in 2nd year
Actuarial Studies...

Second Year

2002 was the year where second year actuarial students began facing new “worst nightmares”. First semester it was STAT272, where the majority of the class professed that they had “never come across a subject so hard in their lives”... That was until ACST243 dawned upon us in second semester. The fact that this year, they had to lower the bar by allowing students to go through to ACST344 with just a PC in 243 may be an indicator of how hard the subject was... or an indicator of how dense our year is (which surely can't be right...!)

Anyway, despite the fact that ACST243 pretty much defined what second year was for most of us, this is not supposed to be a unit article on the subject, (though I think having my perspective would help seeing as the person who wrote the 243 article did **exceedingly** well in it – no names though). My intention for the waffle was to show that second year was the year of frustration for many actuarial students. It was the year of regular trips to the driving range to release our post exam stress by belting golf balls past the 200m marker (or, for the not so experienced, swinging so hard at air that we spun around three times). It was the year where we became library addicts, sitting in a quiet corner for hours on end trying to figure out what Brownian motion really was, and how in this lifetime were we supposed to differentiate it. In fact, if you walked through the library, the rows of heads you see resting on their textbooks - 90% of

these heads belong to second year actuarial students. And no they are not sleeping because they are bored, they are actually silently crying into their textbooks because they are so overwhelmed with how hard uni is, how unfair life was, how bad the weather was, how Macq had no good looking guys/girls to offer, and all other bad things.

But that aside, last year also had its fun moments for us second years (now aren't I the ironic one?) Amidst the headache and heartache from studying, we still managed to find the time to relax, whether it be in the form of trying to do a shoulder stand in yoga class, shooting hoops in the gym or playing Frisbee in “Frisbee land”. ASSOC events were also relatively well attended, with the hi-light being the Annual Dinner, which gave us a chance to have a well-deserved party.

Overall, second year proved to be very tiring and very stressful, but at the end of it, I can safely say that we have in one way or another come out wiser. Furthermore, I realise that all the above feelings cannot be singled out to Second Year Blues. They were felt in first year, and surely will be felt yet again in third year, fourth year, fifth year, sixth year, seventh year, eighth year... (those damn exemptions!)

Seriously though, best of luck to everyone, for some of us this coming year will be our last, for the less fortunate like myself we're only halfway there – but either way we can be proud that we've endured two years of this crazy course.

Third Year

After two years in Actuarial Studies, many things had changed since we sat down for our first ACST151 lecture in C5CT1.

The most obvious of which is that our batch had gotten notably smaller. Correct me if I'm wrong, but on average across the 300-level units, our numbers (those who enrolled in 2000) seem to halved. In ACST344, its about one-quarter of those who did ACST151 two years ago.

This was a combination of people dropping out of the course, people repeating ACST243, and people who weren't bothered to come to lectures (what happened to the people in the back row?!).

Highlights of year 3 include: the hole in our wallets and purses after purchasing the textbook for ACST300; the memorable photo session; and we finally began to do some presentations and group assignments (after harping on for two years about the fact that actuaries need to communicate with colleagues and clients, the department finally integrated such skill-learning into the course).

ACST subjects in third year varied greatly. We were swallowing word, word, word in some units, and number, number, number in others. It was a humbling experience for many who excelled in ACST units of previous years to just scrape a pass in Insurance and Superannuation Practice.

In terms of the brains of the year, our year has been particularly interesting. Unlike the years before and after us there aren't one or two people who have topped every single unit since first semester, year one. In fact, those who started topping units since the latter half of second year weren't even on merit lists in year one. This is some indicator that there has been no monopolising of unit rankings, and maybe an indicator that there is a lower variance in actuarial smartness (notice, actuarial smartness, not IQ) in our batch.

A few of us chose to graduate at the end of this year with a single degree as companies offered attractive full-time packages (both in Australia and overseas) and support for studying Part II externally. This saw a few of our brightest friends leave us early and we wish them the best of luck!

Our attendance record at the annual dinners is improvable is anything... since 2003 is the final year for many, lets give it our best shot and end actuarial in style.

Overall, we've come a long way as a group, and for those who have gone their different ways, we'll continue to keep in touch with you. In the words of Professor Pollard, this has been "fun"!

Fourth Year

So ends the first stage of our Actuarial careers. Four years of hard work has been invested, allowing us to slowly clamber onto this temporary mantle on the path to becoming an Actuary. Although much harder specialists await us, one can't help but reminisce about our time here at Macquarie. It has been an eventful trip for everyone, a roller coaster of highs and lows. We have come along way from youthful ignorant first years, to (hopefully) wiser fourth years.

We have been nurtured by the staff at Macquarie, supported and helped each other across the line. One of the most valuable items we take with us, are the friendships formed from mutual hardship. It is a small profession and we will no doubt see each other in the future. Thus this friendly network of support we have shaped over the years will be priceless as we continue on in our actuarial careers.

This year involved the studying of the Control Cycle, which was refreshingly different from the technical subjects undertaken so far. This unit cumulates what has been taught thus far in the course, and painted a clearer picture of what to expect when out in the real world. It equipped us with a broad overview of what constitutes an actuary and the finer details of what actuarial work is really like in practice. It is considered a transition from the Part I subjects to the Part III subjects, in that it teaches you how to think more open minded when solving problems. Overall the Control Cycle

was an interesting and enjoyable experience.

This year has however been plagued by a myriad of problems and difficult considerations. This includes missing exemptions, study options and job search. At this stage in our study, there are students with gaps missing in their exemptions that need to be filled. What is the better option, to complete them through the institute or the university? Also there are various options available for students in the fourth year. Instead of taking a double degree, one can enrol in a Masters of Commerce in Business, which allows you to complete the Macquarie University component of the Finance Part III examinations as well as the control cycle (note that this might not be a wise option anymore due to the changes in the Part III Actuarial examination process). With job search, this year was also particularly tough with the global economic climate taking a downturn and the number of positions available being reduced. It is an emotional process, which must be endured to eventually find and settle into a job.

However all in all, this year is one of achievement. A stage in our lives has just been completed and we now endeavour to take the next steps towards our Actuarial careers. Staring down the barrel of Part III examinations whilst working certainly is daunting, but it presents a necessary challenge. A challenge that must be attempted endured and hopefully persevered. So wish us luck!

The Verdict – Unit Reviews

100-level units

ACST151

Introduction to Actuarial Studies

One perspective

Imagining yourself in ten years time, inside your luxurious office on the highest floor of the tallest building in the CBD. When you sit back comfortably in your genuine-leather armchair and turn around to appreciate the splendid harbor view outside the window, you may think to yourself: where does this all start? And the answer to that question is ACST151....

Yes, 151 is the start of all. It is the beginning of success, wealth, happiness, prestige, privilege, power...and everything you will ever dream of. It is where actuaries, a group of extremely talented people, embark on one of the most wonderful, rewarding and sparkling careers on this planet. (Can someone quote this passage to the actuarial studies department and make sure that you give them my name and student number, thank you. I was thinking of doing it myself but don't want to be too blatant.)

Now, let's get to the actual content of the subject. Just the thought of the lectures sends a shiver down my body. It is not so much due to the difficulty of the subject, but the physical environment in which the course is taught. I'm not sure of the logic behind using a "double-powered condensing engine"

(well...you tell me one thing that can be so chilly apart from that) instead of an ordinary air-conditioner in the theatre. I guess one explanation will be that the future tasks of actuaries are so demanding and their amount of work so tremendous, that this very course is so designed that it not only provides the teaching of essential knowledge and skills but also the training of the physical endurance of our fellow actuaries. Whatever the reason is...beware the air-con!!!

Before ACST151, one's impression of the actuarial profession is most likely to be one that is dull and purely to do with mathematics and finance. Now, that's not true, as 151 provides a more accurate picture of the abundance in diversity of our beloved course. ACST151 not only deals with numbers and money, but also incorporates the world of philosophy, art, history and literature. OK, to be more precise, it is the philosophy of risk, art of probability, history of insurance and literature of QBasic. So I was slightly misleading there, but then we don't want our innocent first-years bored to death - not so early anyway. For your first-years, there is one thing very exciting as you will be dealing with one of the most important, controversial and perpetual issue in the history of mankind: life and death. In fact, there is so much of this topic in actuarial work that professional actuaries actually draw up a special table to describe it, and that is

called a life table. What that is....I'll leave you to find out yourself.

Now, there is one more thing I want to mention and that is the weekly online assignments at Perdisco, which are counted towards the assessment. These assignments are the real test of the intelligence and flexibility of actuarial students. You do NOT deserve to be an actuary if:

- You are dumb enough to do the first 2 assignments by yourself. (The answers are provided in the Perdisco exercises.)
- You are dumb enough to look for answers for the following assignments in the exercises. (Sorry, those are not provided.)
- You are dumb enough to even attempt a perfect score for these assignments. (Unless, of course, your surname is Mok or Juang.)

Being a general introductory unit, ACST151 is one of the easiest units you can possibly do as an actuarial student. (The only match for it in terms of simplicity is ACST101.) The idea of making 151 such a "walk in the park" is to lure you into a false sense of security before the revelation of real horror: beginning with the brain-killing, sleep-losing, and at the end heart-breaking ACST211. So all I can say to the first-years: good luck and enjoy it while you can.

Another perspective

Three of the thousands of skills you may want to obtain in the course are:

1. How to prevent yourself from ULTIMATE RUIN in a casino
2. How to write professional QBASIC Code
3. How to become RICH by your 65th birthday

No matter whether you have/have not learnt a lot in the course, you will at least remember learning the above three things in the course. They are the enjoyable memories of first year actuaries. Shepherd's speeches about NRL and AFL are good openings in a lecture but I personally love John Pollard's "ahhhmm"s.

As the name of the course, Introduction to Risk and Insurance, suggests, we basically have a very large variety of topics we have to learn in this course. Basically we learn a little bit of everything concerning with what actuaries in Australia do.

Ignore the following if you don't understand QBasic and please hurry up to get some whizzes to teach you.

```
IF YOU=QBASICNERD THEN
PRINTLN "you will do well in this
course"
ELSE IF
YOU=KNOWSOMEQBASIC THEN
PRINTLN " well still you don't have
to worry"
ELSE PRINTLN " Run around
Macq 10 times and find a BASIC
book in the library immediately".
```

Wake up! QBASIC is not the only thing actuaries learn to do. We also learn to utilise the Sfunction and the l_x the life table. There's this thing called the Chain letter method.. oopsy it should be the Chain ladder method which we use to calculate outstanding claims. Time line is the key to this topic and we will learn to draw better time lines in our HD subject the ACST101. I remember Pollard saying that
 $E[ACST101] = HD$ He's probably right.

Around the mid term, we get to watch this movie about Equity Funding which ultimately teaches and amazes us all how QBASIC can help reproduction! Ha! It's actually about phony policies and the no. of life insurance policies is just around a couple of times of the population of the country.

In the later of this course, Shepherd teaches with powerpoint and we just get drowsy every time we look at the screen. All we need to know, when we did the paper, is to use the goal seek in Excel and how to use a simple spreadsheet. He also suggests that if we ever want to get rich we should start our superannuation at 20 and retires at 30!

Nevertheless, ACST151 is a really simple and basic introduction to get first year actuaries to understand the insurance sector and the financial world. I've heard rumours saying how hard this subject is and how low the passing rates are, ACST 151 is actually pretty easy and fun. Don't worry if you can't do the past papers because lecturers teach different stuff every year. Do

Attempt the past papers before the exams, they do help.

You might not possibly fail ACST 151 but don't underestimate the importance of this course as it is the very first subject having ACST as its prefix and it is a pre-requisite of our glorious ACST 211 in the second semester. Actuaries are good mathematicians but you don't really do much maths in this subject which is a disappointment to many of the mathematicians who chose actuaries instead of maths.

Just one comment to the lecturers about the recommended programme, why can't we do ACST101 with ACST 151 and so we will have a easier 2nd semester? 4 subjects with the killer ACST 211 is a pain.....

ACST101

Techniques and Elements of Finance

"Welcome back to year 6!" "Three less hours a week." "Anything less than a High Distinction is a fail." These are just a few of the comments which were pursued on the lips of the students as they exited Macquarie Theatre after the grueling first lecture for ACST101. One techniques lecture, an elements lecture and a tutorial period a week was the required attendance for this course. This can be cut down to 0, 1 or 2 a week depending on your contacts.

The techniques lectures produce some nostalgic memories. Simple

interest, compound interest and more compound interest for the first three weeks of the semester. Sounds like fun? You bet. Combine these engrossing topics with annuities part 1, 2 and 3 in the following three weeks and you have one of the easiest subjects you will ever encounter from your time at Macquarie. Attendance at this lecture is not necessary if you've got friends to collect the sheets for you :). The elements lecture involves you printing incomplete notes off the Internet and filling in the gaps. These lectures are also not necessary to attend if you have friends who have done the subject before and can give you the complete notes. Tutorials are described as not compulsory but attendance will be taken into account for borderline students. So, if you intend to be a borderline student, the tutorials are a necessary requirement, for those who think that they're above or below borderline, then attendance is not compulsory. Again, get friends to attend for you and you will do fine.

Having just explained in a paragraph the lack of difficulty in this subject, I must now emphasise the importance of this subject. Although some of the concepts may seem quite easy, having done them before, there are applications later on in your studies that will require the skills gained from this seemingly pointless unit. Do not go into this subject with the attitude that this is a freebie. There are no free subjects in university and you still have to do the work. Careless errors in the techniques section and lack of attention to the

elements component of the course could make this subject quite difficult.

For references sake, the author of this subject report registered a credit as a result of approaching the subject in the wrong way - so, I do speak from experience.

ACCG100

Accounting 1A

If I have to describe ACCG100 with two words... it'll be this... "things happen." Shortly, you'll see why. With this unit probably being the first lecture that you'll walk into after enrolling in Actuarial Studies at MQ, your hopes of becoming a qualified actuary beings. *Cough cough...* it is an exemption subject after all.

Despite the timetable stating that lectures are of length two hours, you'll soon realise that in reality, it's not. The second lecture which you have to painfully wait till 5 from your morning lecture, and now long awaiting and more eager than ever, would be met by a maximum of half an hour's worth. For some, that's joy, for others, it's traumatic. For the whole semester, you'll find yourself frantically writing down what's dictated and nothing else. So as a tip, get used to this style of teaching, take good notes, as the week before the exams, you'll probably find yourself digging and relying on them... unless you would prefer the "big book." Ouch...

The tutorial homework generally take **hours** to do, as you try in vein

to balance something. The result is generally... you drop your pen (after pulling out your hair) and then... restlessly wait for the solutions in the coming tutes. It's not because we actuarial students can't do the maths, but rather, no one ever told us how important learning to add and subtract was. We long thought we would never apply these skills as rigorous as now. What a shame that there's no integration for us to do.

If you thought that the "big book" was more than enough to last you for a year, you're right. However, there is something more... the "Practice Set". The Practice Set is a **whole** book devoted to enable you to *reveal* and *demonstrate* what "book keeping" and other skills you have learnt in ACCG100. Just what you had always wanted. However, you would unbelievably spend "months" on this book and the worst thing is that it'll probably **not** balance, sending you literally insane. However, as time passes, and the pressure is on for it to be completed, various "bibles" do begin to lurk around. If you're lucky enough, you may have the chance to encounter one, and be enlightened, freeing you from the possibility of going "crazy" like others. But I have to say no pain, no gain.

Things happen... in the final exam. From balance sheets that don't balance for some, to worksheets that took others *hours* to complete, together with extended responses that only a handful understood what "stewardship" meant, it was a truly stimulating experience. Walking out of the exam room

seeing some look suicidal, while others with a huge grin on their innocent faces, all I can say is once again, things happen. I'll leave you to experience this phenomenon and to appreciate it yourself. However, not everyone has the opportunity to experience this mysterious effect, but you'll most definitely find someone that would be able to share it with you.

By the way, ACCG101 is another story... but in brief, "things happen" in that one too.

ACCG101

Accounting 1B

ACCG101 is a second semester subject that follows on from ACCG100. The first impression would be that the two subjects were really not too different. We used the same textbook ACCOUNTING IN AUSTRALIA as before. Alex would still tell the same jokes as he told in ACCG100: that a stakeholder is not a 'steakholder' in front of a Barbie. Opportunities to practice kindergarten maths were ever so present in the form of the Accounting Practice Set.

In terms of the study material, ACCG101 is much more advanced than ACCG100 in that you cannot complete the homework while watching TV, eating dinner and playing cards at the same time. (Yes, you could have done so in ACCG100.) There is much less reading from the textbook as each topic is merely an extension of materials covered in ACCG100.

But that was the first impression. If there was something strikingly different about ACCG101, it would be the mentality. Accounting, in all its simplicity, had come to haunt even the most capable actuaries. No longer were we overjoyed to see these fantastic results from the multiple choice test: the final exam would be gruesome and that was what counted. No longer would we day dream about the glorious weekend that we had as we came to realize the importance of actually staying awake in lectures. No longer was the MAC THEATRE as crowded as the YUM CHA in Chinatown. We knew that many of our fellow battlers had to take a detour via the route 105.

I guess for some of us who thought that accounting is for wusses, the notion has got to go. Being able to add, subtract or even multiply would not take you past ACCG101. As ACCG100, the final exam of ACCG101 would incorporate many elements that really question the solidarity of the student's knowledge. But I guess like all subjects consistent studying would take you through the subject.

For those of us who still had no idea about accounting after the first semester, this subject had taken us through the gateway. For the first time, we were able to appreciate the various uses of accounting and its integrity in the business environment. Unlike ACCG100, it will help you later on. P.S. this is not to say that you should eat, watch TV and play cards while you are doing your ACCG100 homework.

COMP115

Introduction to Computer Science

One of the reasons why actuary was my first choice of profession was that I thought there would be little programming involved. Apart from typing up high school assignments there was little that I knew about computers.

That was why COMP115 came as a shock to me. A computer subject? And programming is involved also? After I bought the textbooks I felt doomed to failure: there were three textbooks, all of which seemed to speak a different language other than English. People from higher years kept on reassuring me that it wouldn't be a big deal but I didn't believe them. They might have done well but I was simply not a computer wiz like them.

There was no better way to start the subject with the lecturer babbling on incessantly about the Turing machine and the Universal machine. None of which I felt was related to computers. A week into the subject, I realized that we should have read around 50 pages in each textbook. I went into the first tutorial not knowing anything and I got half of the true and false questions correct (which would be the expected value if you guessed everything).

Lost and confused, I was hit hard by the first year syndrome. It seemed that university and high school are two completely different worlds. And I was still dwelling in

my high school glories. I suddenly realized that no matter how fantastic the HSC result was, it was just another statistic. It would not aid you in any way. Life must start all over again.

With much determination, I began reading the textbooks. Like a newborn baby, I started to learn the tongue of the computer world and soon it all started to make sense. Even though I was doing catch-up most of the time, came exam time, I didn't have to read slabs of texts.

The exam turned out to be quite an anticlimax and while I was doing the exam the words of the senior students started to ring true. With forty-five multiple choices, it was difficult not to pass.

While I bask in the joy of overcoming one of my worst fears, I feel the urge to say that COMP115 was not so difficult. However, the skill to survival in university is one of the truly valuable abilities that the subject has taught me.

COMP125

Fundamentals of Computer Science

Apart from the people doing a double degree with computing studies, most actuarial students would be doing the easier COMP 115. The few who are attempting this unit without the need to should be commended for their sense of adventure and fearlessness.

As to the subject itself, it doesn't really matter if you've never studied computer programming before. The Schaum textbook (the yellow one) is very good at guiding a beginner through the intricate process of C++ programming step by step. It really is one of the few textbooks that is worth every cent that you pay.

It is strongly recommended that students who are not familiar with programming to keep up to date with the recommended reading guide, as well as reading through the chapters of Schaum. The unit starts off quite easy and straight forward, but soon gets more complicated as you delve into the world of arrays and dynamic memory allocation using pointers. You'll have a much better chance of achieving high marks if you read the text books because the lectures don't cover all that you need to know.

The tutorials for this subject are very helpful and stimulating. However, that's more than can be said for the practicals. First time you go to a prac, you find that it's not uncommon for the students to raise their hands in the air, asking for help, only to wait 30 minutes for someone to come over to say that they don't know what's wrong with the program and hence can't help. Usually, there won't be a second time. (Ok, there will be a second time, but only because you need to get your assignment marked.)

Speaking of assignments, there are 4 that you need to complete. None of them are terribly difficult. More time will be spent searching for a

few pesky missing semi-colons than writing the actual programs themselves.

All in all, a stimulating subject which is challenging. Anyone who likes to think logically should like this subject.

ECON111

Microeconomic Principles

Question: What do you see when you look outside a hotel room window in Hong Kong?

To a normal human being, the answer will probably be people or buildings or pollution (depending on how high up you are). However, to Mr Allan McHarg (the lecturer in charge), the answer is.....economics.

No, that wasn't a typo, it was economics.

This is one lecturer who is passionate about the subject he teaches and has a serious economics brain. Given the opportunity, he'd turn a simple, everyday activity such as watching TV into an economics analysis.

Perhaps this is a good example for other lecturers to follow, because the lectures that were given were all well planned and delivered. Generally, they were quite interesting, although sometimes you find yourself counting how many graphs he had drawn or how many times he said "indeed" during the lecture.

It was quite amazing how through all the 45 lectures that he gave, he managed to keep a straight face and the same mechanical tone of voice all the way through. He doesn't even laugh at his own jokes! Once he almost cracked a smile, but was quick to return to he's usual monotone expression.

The tutorials are worth going to, since the tute questions puts the theory taught in lectures into practice, although if you've bothered to answer the questions yourself, you'll probably find that you'll be copying down better and more concise answers during the tute.

Now to what you learn in the subject.....well.....I heard that if you did economics for the HSC, the first few weeks is a repeat of what you should already know. Other than that, I seem to remember drawing lots of curves and hearing something about elastic bands.

ECON110

Macroeconomic Principles

This is the course where everyone will, at some stage, become aquatinted with the wacky but wonderful Alex Blair.

If your online login doesn't work, or you forget to complete your online quizzes on time, you want to change your tutorial class, your assignment is lost, or your whole world is collapsing, this is the one guy you've got to know.

Having said so, as this is a first year subject, the administration of the whole course might remind you a little of your high school years and this is to allow for the smooth transition from high school to uni for the first years, so you may not need to hassle Alex as much as the first years' will need to.

ECON110 is a well-structured course with an excellent textbook, which is conveniently written by one of the lecturers, Rod O'Donnell you will have. This will be one of the few subjects where lectures aren't necessary if you read the textbook, since the text is just a more detailed version of the lectures.

If you do attend the lectures, go with pens in your hands and get ready to scribble down all the diagrams because the lecture notes now don't have them and it is common knowledge that drawing the diagrams yourself by hand will help you recall for your finals when you have to produce them again.

Although this course has a huge content, actuarial students should not find this course hard at all, considering all practice you get from the 2 assignments, the 12 online multiple choice quizzes and the 2 multiple-choice class tests you get, so in essence you are constantly practicing for your finals. The final exam itself is quite easy especially when they are no different to the past papers which you will all get copies of.

MATH133

Mathematics 1B (Advanced)

Whenever one thinks about pure maths, they think of an Einstein look-alike sitting at his desk for months on end proving a single theorem because someone centuries ago didn't have enough room in their margin. This sort of behaviour can only be explained as a labour of love, which I think sums up pure maths pretty well. If you love maths, then you'll absolutely love this unit (and any other unit with the prefix MATH for that matter), if you're a bit less spiritually (and perhaps more financially) inclined, then you'll treat this unit as another stressful stepping stone on the path to actuarial riches.

MATH133 is the only compulsory pure maths unit you'll have to do, which may be a good thing or a bad thing (depending on the health of your heart). You can decide to combine your actuarial degree with a degree in maths, if you think you can handle all that excitement. I have to warn you that MATH133 is known to be so exciting that a certain student (who shall remain nameless for fear of lawsuit) did his class test twice (in two different tutorials in case you're wondering). If you feel you may be the sort of person who is likely to be driven into this kind of madness, then seriously consider taking up more MATH units by doing the double, because you'll be right at home.

The unit is taught by two lecturers, who take you on different days of the week, while teaching you

separate topics. This may be disconcerting at first, you'll soon get used to it, after you see how the distinct topics relate to each other. Rod Yager took the calculus and the series and sequences part of the coursework, while Chris Cooper took the matrix and group theory parts.

You'd probably like to know that you do learn a lot of important skills in this unit. For example, on the first day, you'll be taught how to use the effective method known (by students) as 'fudging the solution' when attempting to prove some limits. Sequences, series and matrices are absolutely essential to actuarial work, so make sure you pay more attention to those than you would otherwise. Out of all the topics covered, Group Theory is no doubt the hardest to understand: it's very abstract and must be looked at in a different state of mind, but don't worry about this as the ridiculously early lecture times will hopefully get you into a different state of mind via sleep deprivation.

Yager's lectures basically involved taking down heaps of notes, which was made considerably more challenging due to the fact that the lecturer is left handed and often covers what he just wrote when he is writing. If you can handle the feat of listening to what he is saying while at the same time, writing down what he said seconds ago at an inhuman pace then you'll have no problems. If you can't, then just try your best and avoid having any commitments after the lecture, because you'll need an hour or so to catch up and, then, recuperate. Cooper's lectures involve a similar

volume of notes (however, he does provide you with brief, albeit useful, summary sheets). Not all the lectures are well organized but they are very well detailed - detailed enough to study from for the final.

There are no textbooks, although the famous 'Chen notes' do accumulate to one if you printed them out (which you shouldn't try unless you like the idea of being verbally abused while holding up the printing queue – yes, I do speak from experience). These notes may be useful but they are extremely detailed and most of it will not be useful exam-wise. Then again, if you love maths, and want a deeper understanding, then these notes are perfect.

The tutorials are absolutely essential as they should give you an idea on what sort of questions there will be in the exam. The assignments and class tests were not very difficult, and also proved to be surprisingly good study material. The past papers were not very useful because the course changes often in the unit; so don't be worried (like I was) if you got a fat zero when you tried one of the sections (unless it had matrix arithmetic). The great thing about MATH133 is that the exams are fairly easy, if you consider how hard the lecturers can actually make it.

MATH133 acts as a departure point from the pure maths you've grown to love (or otherwise) over the course of previous schooling years, to the more specialized actuarial maths you will encounter under the prefix of ACST. Nevertheless, I've

found the unit to be very interesting and gratifying to do.

STAT171

Statistical Data Analysis

This has to be the easiest subject undoubtedly. Well, you do get a whole A4 sheet (double sided too!) with whatever you want written on it... and in whatever font you wish (size 2 is very popular... I think). However, is it as easy as it sounds?

The lectures are awesome. You walk in, and there'll be nicely typed up overheads ready for you to pick up and *hopefully* absorb. The first four weeks seemed to be a breeze, touching on the very basics which bores you to death. Don't despair, the challenge will come. The amount and complexity of the subject begins to grow exponentially, or rather, at an exploding rate towards the final weeks. The mass of detail, formulae and assumptions that you will encounter soon becomes overwhelming. You begin to sit in lectures wondering what is happening, staring at all the notations which sounds all confusing and devastating, only to realise when you read it at home... "is that it...".

Tutorial questions do have to be completed before the tutes. They don't take that much time to do, but it's good practice and probably the only questions that you'll do. So make the most out of it. The tutes generally reinforces the key concepts that were introduced and

hints the standards expected of you. The tutes are definitely a worthwhile thing, not that you get to choose if you want to go or not, because it's worth a whopping 8%... what a gift!

Learning to use Minitab was also essential for this unit. It's actually quite friendly, so have no fear of it. Not only was it necessary for the assignments, the final exam also had extracts from it, which you would certainly have to interpret for a chance to have a stab at that question. I still remember the day when the lecturer swiftly placed on the overhead the site to download the "crack" for the Minitab software. Of course he took no responsibility, but we didn't mind! "You're a legend..." I remember someone say... No longer were you restricted to that 30 day trial download!

Regarding the assignments, all I can remember was poor trees. With assignments that ranged from point eight to one centimetre in thickness, or equivalently, forty to fifty pages for some, it is a big thing. However, most of it was just graphs and results produced by Minitab, but nevertheless it's an effort. You do get two assignments too, but the first one is considerably shorter, thankfully.

As the exams approach, you will find that you rely more and more on the "cheat sheet." You literally spend hours preparing it, studying with it too, until it becomes a part of your life. Some A4 sheets are real pieces of art, and others just desperate attempts to cram every lecture overhead into it. In general,

the exams are not that difficult given you have done your work. Just another tip, before you dive head first into a question, make sure you know what you're doing. So beware, and read the question! You'll fully appreciate and understand what I mean when you do your second class test. Hint hint... However, the final exam contained only a handful of tricky questions, but enough to prevent some from their HDs... so be warned, and prepared. Then again, don't forget that you are doing stats, and who said it's easy?

Just a note, no magnifying glasses allowed in the final exams. Size 2 is ideal... but anything smaller, make sure you have your glasses modified.

200-level units

ACST211

Combinatorial Probability

On the first day of ACST211, the lecturer said that our GPAs would be the highest they will ever be. After a few weeks into the unit, we could all see why he was so confident in making this prediction. Most actuarial students who have done this unit refer to it only as '211' (two-one-one). This is usually spoken with such a degree of dread that it sounds rather suspiciously similar to '911'. This is, coincidentally, quite fitting as '211' continues to cause the most actuarial 'casualties' than any other unit encountered in 1st year.

ACST211 is the first 200-level subject in the recommended course, and as a result should be treated with care. It covers material involving probabilities, their application, and techniques in assigning them to various events, with particular emphasis on combinatorial methods (not that you actually care). Each topic deals with a distinct subject matter and is covered in a week, meaning you really have to keep up to date, unless you like the idea of 13-hour 'study marathons' (which aren't healthy – trust me). Topics range from familiar material in permutations and combinations to completely new material such as Markov chains and nested integrals. Since '211' is so central to actuarial science on the whole, it would be fair to say that if you find

'211' interesting, you'll probably find actuarial studies interesting.

There are many reasons why ACST211 is renowned for its ability to cause more exam-induced stress than all the other 1st year units put together. One of the main reasons is that ACST211 papers are negatively marked, which means that you can lose marks from those you've already got. Therefore it is quite possible to walk into your final exam with a – 10% 'in the bag' from the mid-semester. This feature, albeit rather harsh, conforms to the firm actuarial belief that a wrong solution is worse than no solution – I guess all those HIH actuaries thought just cashing in their speed bonus was ok. Success in '211' depends a lot on the accuracy of one's knowledge of the material.

Another reason why ACST211 is so challenging is that one cannot merely learn the material by rote and expect to get a decent mark in the final exam. Merely studying the notes and the examples provided is useless, besides giving you a false sense of security. You need to attempt the tutorial questions provided, and understand the processes and all the available alternative methods in solving them. By doing all of this you'll hopefully get a pass, which is what everyone aims for right after they see the previous years' exam papers.

To get anything higher, you'll need to do well in Paper 2, which is an

additional non-compulsory paper you sit after the main one. Paper 2, nicknamed (proudly by some) as “The IQ Test”, is one which has questions you’ve most likely never seen before. A deep understanding of the coursework is essential but you’ll also need intuition and a skill in analyzing unfamiliar problems (yeah, and a huge IQ helps). One secret to this is in attempting millions of questions and gaining experience from your mistakes (after stubbornly refusing to acknowledge your friend’s explanation that you read the question wrong). Nevertheless, the lecturer encourages discussion (or perhaps heated arguments!) about conflicting answers rather than just revealing the correct answer, so that you can see why other people got it wrong.

Although most actuarial students, when asked about ‘211’, think only of sleepless nights, excessive coffee-abuse and the Red Bull or two before the exam, they will all admit that they have received a unique experience from what is undoubtedly a unique unit. Unlike many other units on offer, ACST211 does not aim to merely teach you ‘what to think’ but, more importantly, ‘how to think’ in order to become an effective actuary.

ACST200

Mathematics of Finance

This is one semester you will spend again with Jim Farmer. NOOOOOO...I hear you say? Well this isn’t supposed to be a bad thing; in fact, if you haven’t already

you might get to see another side of him you have never seen before. Maybe it was just me, but he seemed to crack more jokes this semester than in ACST211. His biggest one was making latecomers sit in the last 2 rows of the lecture theatre, so latecomers would supposedly ‘not disrupt the rest of the class’. Since most of the lectures take place at 9 in the morning, the last 2 rows later changed to the last 3-4 rows. Thus, if you are late, you MUST sit in the back few rows, even this if it means Jim stopping the whole class to wait until you walk to the back when you try sneak to the front to with with your friends. (See the irony of this all??)

Despite all the fun from the latecomers, the lectures themselves are very good. His jokes may not be funny but his teaching makes up for it. And attending his lectures (even if you are late) is one of the keys to getting your exemption to this course. Although the context may not be as hard as the other ACST units you will later encounter, this course nevertheless requires lots of hard work and effort as is shown by the credits points this unit is worth (ie 4 if you still don’t know).

Since most of you will have fallen in the habit from ACST211 of not going to tutorials, you will probably find the tutes for ACST200 empty as well. Tutorials are not compulsory, but are helpful if you need help, since if I remember correctly...Jim doesn’t give out consultation hours.

There are 2 multiple-choice tests in the semester that both have negative marking, but that shouldn’t surprise you since Jim Farmer is

taking the course. The 2 class tests are not difficult, but be WELL prepared for the final because questions range from easy to hard and on top of that we all know you enjoy Jim's negative marking.

My words of advice? Study hard and STUDY HARD!!!!

ACST243

Actuarial Modelling

Question: Just how many lines of writing can you fit on an A4 'crib sheet'? If you ask a group of 243 students outside their exam room, you'll see some with 15 lines, and others with 400 lines.

Being warned from the first day at uni by those who has done the unit, this was to be expected. They had all said that it would be the hardest unit of the whole Actuarial program, and have the quotes to back it. They also act in the reverse fashion to most other students - they attributed their success in that unit to luck, and those who were left behind did not hide the fact that the skill needed for this unit was not easily understood.

For the first time student of 243, making it into the unit is an achievement in itself. You needed to pass ACST210 (or 211) and STAT 272, which were arguably the hardest units in their respective semesters. There's also the GPA requirement, which is on the rise.

Walking into the first lecture proudly, this is probably the first time that the actuarial student would find a large number of

unfamiliar faces. Talking to your seniors would reveal the common attitude that it is reasonably OK to repeat the unit.

Jim Farmer took us for the first two sections of the course. The first two weeks of the course are spent on describing stochastic processes and martingales, which both involve some vigorous probability theory. To the pure mathematicians, this may signal "walk in the park", but to the rest of us there is only one word to describe it is "abstract". Main concepts are "stationarity", "independence", Markov property, etc.

The next section dealt with Markov Jump processes, which are Markov chains in continuous time, an extension of the discrete time Markov chains in ACST210 (211). A sound understanding of that section of 210 is essential, otherwise the student is lost in the matrix of long maths proofs of some "intuitively correct" results. Applications of this theory was demonstrated through examining mortality and sickness models.

Four weeks were then spent on Time Series analysis, taught by Sue Clarke. This sections draws heavily on the material in the first two weeks. This is a topic which proves to be "make or break" for the majority, as it singled out those who have not kept themselves up to date. "Autocorrelation" and "Partial Autocorrelation" were new terms to us, and most of the maths revolved around these concepts. In terms of mathematical models, this is the most involved topic as it includes not just fitting models using past data, but also

determining which model is appropriate and also to use it to forecast future data.

During these weeks we also had the class test, which was really a wake up call. With negative marking, some managed to get a negative total (so you thought that wasn't possible?), and the average mark turned out to be 40%. The 'majority' who got below 50% then asked on the bulletin board what the 'official' pass mark was, only to get a prompt reply that it would be, as usual, 50%. But then, it only counted 10% to the total assessment, all is not lost.

The final sections were taught by Glen Barnett. We spent two weeks on Brownian Motion and another two on Simulation. These two topics have some statistical feel to it, especially simulation, which was based mainly on random number generation techniques. Brownian motion was taught quickly, meaning a lot of extra time needs to be spent at home to absorb all the details. The same story held with simulation - we were introduced to a myriad of random number generation concepts and techniques, and so we had to spend most nights at home, with the ever growing simulation notes on the desk, and our glowing eyes fixed on them.

What did the lecturers feel about all this? While last year's handbook narrated the lecturers consistently reminding you of how hard the course really is, this year it did not happen. Instead they told us how much easier we are having it this year, due to the number of tricky topics eliminated from the course.

In the end, as always is the exam. This is one of the few units where you can bring a crib sheet that is either "hand written or printed", so those who are desperate may write 4 crib sheets and shrink it onto one A4 page. That will make it a world record breaking 400 line crib sheet, which you would almost surely not have enough time to look up in the exam. However, we do not recommend the 15 line cheat sheet as we do not believe that anyone can have such photographic memory.

In all, the main tip for this unit is - spend adequate time on all the material. You would find that you need one and a half hours each day at least (outside classes) to stay on top, but at the end, it will prove to be time well spent. Do all the problems that you can (and that means going to all tutes). What trips people up in this unit, as told by Jim Farmer, is that you may see a problem, and you have absolutely no idea on how to approach it. When you see the solution, however, it seems totally obvious. So get a feel for rationally approaching a problem is essential.

Finally, we would like to offer our best wishes to those who are about to attempt the unit. It will prove to be a uniquely Actuarial experience.

STAT272

Probability

OK, most people in past years have labelled this unit the hardest unit in the first semester of second year. But has anyone actually

given us a good reason? May be not.

The only reason why this course could be described as difficult is because we are taught a large amount of theory without any applications. It is also a marked change in the Statistical realm for us, as it has gotten a lot more mathematically vigorous. Trying to evaluate the 'moments' of various distributions may be tricky (e.g. try to find an integral in the expression that you know is a constant), but these tricks are valuable as they are used widely in future courses. That's also why this course is the prerequisite for quite a number of 300-level ACST units.

Back to the course. The first part of the course is a review of basic statistical mathematics (probability, conditional probs, pdf's, etc.). While this may seem to be STAT171 material, the presentation is significantly different. This distinctively mathematical treatment, if ignored, would hamper future efforts in the course. Do not fall into the trap of ignoring the theory in the first 2 weeks.

Then we proceed to learn of important statistical distributions, how they come about, and how they can be described. Again, this is groundwork for future courses. The Poisson process and Moment Generating functions are particularly important concepts that take quite a bit of time to understand, so it's worth time doing all the tute exercises (they are worth 2% after all). We also have a look at discrete bivariate distributions.

Finally, we come to the section on sampling. We explore sampling distributions and sample statistics, and how they can be used to estimate distribution parameters. A discussion of the all important Central Limit Theorem follows. The last week is spent on "non-examinable" material - continuous bivariate distributions.

It is worth noting that in order to be successful in this course, the material has to be thoroughly understood. A good indication is the "uselessness" of the crib sheet (doesn't that sound contradictory). The only resources you need in the exam would be the statistical distributions summary (from the textbook) and the tables. The exam is of such length that you will have no chance of finishing if you look up the crib sheet too many times.

Another tip for this exam is related to the previous one. Despite the effort required, do all the assignments. It may be tempting to leech the assignment solutions off some early-finishing knowledgeable one, but the practice would prove to be invaluable.

Finally, one more thing. You've got those "8 overheads on one side of an A4" lecture notes, but at least you don't have to pay for them. Do study them thoroughly, it is more appropriate to the course than the textbook.

STAT271

Statistics I

In some circles, STAT271 is seen as the harder of the of the 200 level statistics subjects us aspiring actuaries must encounter. I believe it doesn't even come close. Maybe it was the fact that we had ACST243 to compete with but it may also have been the abrupt arrival of Barry Quinn, whisked away from his niche in England. Such energy, confidence and knowledge was quite unexpected. Gone were the days of deep, deep sleep amidst the hypothesis testing and data distributions. Gone were the days where confusion and blank expressions filled each and every student. Even the 500 or so slides of microscopic size didn't seem to bother us any more. Barry was ever so helpful inside and outside of classes, willing to explain everything in great detail. With this in mind, I am not suggesting this subject is a GPA booster, on the contrary, it is a rather difficult subject. Barry was a blessing to some but an omen to others. Many students began to take the subject for granted and gave the final exam less respect than it deserved. All in all, STAT271 may not be as hard as ACST243 but hard enough to require some consistent effort.

Hint: Get yourself a study group and do as many questions as you can.

ECON201

Macroeconomic Analysis

Things that were useful in lectures: the daily newspaper, *Cosmopolitan* or *Cleo* (yes even for the guys.... I think the half naked women grabbed their attention), a real life version of 'Guess Who?' (Pretty much like the board game but using people in the lecture theatre – Hint: don't pick someone wearing yellow), etc... Pretty much anything that could keep you awake. Despite lectures being only an hour long there seemed to be a problem maintaining concentration. Perhaps it was because of the 2 or 3 hour wait after the last lecture or the fact that the material wasn't crash hot.

In the end lectures were pretty damn important because the textbook was rather useless. It was deceptively nice and thin but the contents did not seem to match what was learnt in the lectures. So the idea of cramming is not one that I would vouch for unless you've taken someone else's notes who did manage to stay awake during the lecture. Writing down hand written notes is especially important during Wylie Bradford's reign as our lecturer, the lecture slides during that time when read alone don't make very much sense.

Tutorials, personally, weren't all that great. I think my tutorial group learnt a lot more from students' presentations than from what the tutor had to say. According to last years article on this subject, tutorials are good when you have a good tutor so I recommend that you show up to tutes and judge for yourself and while you're there be

marked for attendance because you need to go to a certain amount.

Although the content of this subject may seem kind of dry, if you apply yourself you'll find that the subject is actually quite worthwhile. Overall don't forget that this is a 4-credit point subject which requires an exemption. So don't slack off!

ACCG253

Financial Management

ACCG253 is as good as it gets for us actuarial students.

What more can be said of a subject where only 5% of enrolled students turn up to lectures. No more than a cram session two days before finals is required but for those future finance gurus, this subject can be seen as a small stepping stone onto bigger and better things.

Compulsory tutorials acts as the only motivation for study during the semester but 1 hour a week is a far cry from what our other subjects require.

All in all, since us actuaries tend to do most of our weekly tute work, ACCG253 is a mere bump in the road and shouldn't bother any of us one bit.

300-level units

ACST 300

Insurance and Superannuation Practice

If you wanted to visualise your future as a traditionalist, then the window of choice is ACST 300. This subject provides a glance of each of the major fields of actuarial expertise, save finance. General, health, life and super are covered in turn for sneak peek at the excitement of primal actuarial theory vs. reality.

The Life insurance module was concisely presented, in a format emphasising factuality and practice. By far the most important points that students picked up from Superannuation would have to be double dipping for that extra yacht and how to use the smouldering HIH to avert attention away from the fact that your pants are down. Visiting lecturer Watson provided the basics of health insurance with a supplement on the ABC of cost-effective health insurance benefit extraction. And who could ever forget that Professor Pollard demonstrated that "General Insurance is Fun" with the case of *uberrima fides* and the cindered G-string.

While it is to remember that ACST300 2002 was Professor Pollard's last hurrah as a permanent lecturer, it can be guaranteed that this subject will continue as an amusing crash course on the many tears and

triumphs actuaries face in the real world.

ACST305

Quantitative Methods for Asset Liability Management

The long name for this course is good indication of its content. A larger-than expected sampling of finance for the financially uninitiated or disinterested. Virtually the entire finance major in a nutshell. More maths than the average finance student could handle.

A well-presented program, taking care to cover the first steps of financial competency before attempting to hammer-throw students through the applications of Brownian motion and the like. The fact that this course is now NCCW ACCG329 (Security Pricing and Hedging) suggests that a good deal of security pricing and hedging is involved. Rumours that this course is simultaneously VNTRQ101 are false. Notes are detailed and sufficient.

This course, also known by the IAA as 109 is supposed to be the hardest of Part 1. As the continuation of 103 (ACST243), one would be wise to have a good handle of mentioned subject. Applications seem to be the focus, with a fair amount of associated background calculus. It is an

excellent stepping-stone for actuaries keen to enter the financial industry.

ACST399

Mathematical Theory of Risk

I found ACST399 to be quite an interesting unit because it consolidates much of what we learned in the first two years of university, and it applies to the real world. Being able to recall concepts from STAT271 and STAT272 such as moment generating functions, estimators, likelihood functions, conditional expectations and transformations of random variables was very useful for me because these concepts form the framework for the first half of the course.

The section on risk theory, which really takes up a lot of the course, is mathematically challenging, and is a good test of the actuarial mind. The section on risk theory and reinsurance is also quite tough – understanding the lognormal distribution in ACST243 helps. Outstanding claims is an extension of the basics which were taught in ACST151. A basic understanding of Generalised Linear Modelling can also prove to be useful because of its growing importance in the general insurance industry. However, I found Decision Theory to be the most interesting section because it provides a very handy distraction from the (sometimes) overwhelming actuarial work.

As can be seen, there is a great deal to cover in the Mathematical Theory of Risk. Enjoying ACST399 is probably a good indicator that general insurance is the go for you.

ACST344

Survival Models

Roses are red, Violets are Blue

Overcame 243? Then good for you.

(I was thinking of another version and the second line went "Got into 344? Whew!")

You're now at the beginning of the end of your actuarial degree - Nothing could be sweeter than knowing that a BCom(ACST) awaits you once you pass this course... and ACST300 as well.

As its name says, this program is about survival models. There is comprehensive coverage of the concepts and techniques behind actuarial modelling of the modern day. That being said, you will still be consigned to using IAAust life tables which are 2 decades old.

Those of you who were pretty confused with forces of mortality, backward and forward equations and transition probabilities in ACST 243 would be pleased to know that this course gives lots of room to finally home in on those grainy concepts.

A very practical course I should add, considering that a small portion of this course is dedicated

to a group assignment (to which parasites should cheer), plus you'll get to flex those finger muscles on calculators in life annuity and policy valuations. A strongly recommended program especially for those of you who intend to have some work experience in a life insurance company this coming summer.

internships in life insurance and superannuation. Like ACST344, sizeable competence is a requirement to get the exemption. Otherwise, you should be pleased to know that ACST345 is a terminal course in which your performance has no bearing to you qualifying for another course.

ACST 345

Contingent Payments

A sequel to ACST344, ACST345 demands students to have mastered many of the 344 concepts especially those of commutation; for this is the essence of the course.

The highlights of this course would have to be the group research presentation, the topic of which you have full reign. Interesting areas of research like Sex and Mortality (*and I don't mean 'gender'*), Genetics and Mortality, Alcoholism, Sleep have been touched on to some degree or another.

The rest of the course is as mentioned earlier, very much related to commutational calculations, which can prove to be a drag after 10 weeks. Students are also given reprieve in the form of two hands-on practicals in the computer labs - where you perform profit-testing in Excel, peek at your e-mails, and learn of the importance of "ALT + TAB".

This course is especially useful to those of you interested in summer

400-level units

ACST 400

Actuarial Planning & Control I

The Control Cycle is refreshingly different from the technical subjects completed thus far in the Actuarial degree. It gives an overview of the cyclical nature of the actuarial process, from specifying a problem, developing and implementing a solution to the monitoring of the outcome. The key to the control cycle is to understand that the process does not end there. When monitoring the outcome, are the results as expected and what can be done to resolve any changes in the previous circumstances. Therefore the actuarial process effectively starts again, becoming cyclical and never ending. ACST400 predominately deals with the first two stages of the cycle, the specification of the problem and the development and implementation of a solution.

We are shown that this process is applied to practically any situation, and are given interesting examples from real work practices where this applies such as pricing, reserving, valuations and modelling. This course also focuses on professionalism, identification of risks and their possible solutions. In its entirety, ACST 400 cumulates into a real life perspective, the brief insights of what an actuary does as described by previous units. It shows the applications of the control cycle to life insurance, general insurance, superannuation,

and finance as well as to other less traditional areas of actuarial practice.

This subject however is accompanied with a large volume of case study readings. It is recommended that you keep relatively up to date, so that you are not too overwhelmed when nearing exam time. An important tip is that it really does help to form little study groups to discuss pass papers and to brainstorm ideas. Note that you don't necessarily do this only close to exams when you have covered the entire course. There are a lot of questions referring to earlier sections and also some only requiring some thoughtful common sense. So start early and be well prepared by the time exams are due. Overall ACST400 is a great overview of the practical aspects of Actuarial Studies and I hope you find this subject both interesting and enjoyable.

ACST 401

Actuarial Planning & Control II

ACST 401 is more detailed than ACST 400, in that it deals with the more intricate aspects of Actuarial Studies in practice. It completes the cycle by analysing the monitoring of the outcomes step, separately considering the industry specific particulars from finance, life, general and super. There is a large focus on investments, solvency and

profit sharing from each of these various industries, as well as the methods by which to assess them. An important aspect of the course is to understand the correlation between different aspects of a business. For example, changes to assumptions that affect assets, will correspondingly affect liabilities and vice-versa.

Again, there is a substantial amount of readings particularly from the textbook, and it would be helpful to keep up to date. The numerical component of this subject is found towards the end of the course in analysis of profits and analysis of surpluses. This can be tricky and it is a wise choice to do as many examples as you can. Likewise with the rest of the course, it is extremely helpful to form study groups to discuss the pass paper questions.

Overall ACST 401 contributes well to a more complete understanding of Actuarial studies. Together with ACST 400, the Control Cycle congregates previous knowledge obtained from subjects already completed into a clearer picture of what defines an Actuary. Hopefully you will find that the control cycle has set the groundwork on which to build your future Actuarial career.

Constellation – The Annual Dinner

The 18th of October marked one of the grandest events in Actuarial history – *Constellation*, the 2002 Annual Dinner. Held by the Joint Actuarial Students' Societies (ASOC from UNSW and ASSOC from Macquarie), the night took place at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in the city. A total of 117 students from MQ and 110 from UNSW attended to make a totally awesome night.

Though the night was a joint event, we would like to point out (albeit ungracefully) that Macquarie students did the majority of the work. However, we admit that this was not due to the fact that UNSW were not willing to lend a helping hand, but more to do with the fact that we did not trust them. And so with the heavy burden on our shoulders, the ASSOC committee began to mould what was to become one of the best Annual Dinners ever held (so what if there have only been three so far?).

The few months leading up to the night were chaotic, but we finally managed to have the venue and sponsorship confirmed, tickets and booklets designed and printed (did they look good or what?), balloons and lollipops ordered and both a DJ and band lined up. The only problem was that we didn't have enough sales. Last minute marketing turned bizarre, the situation was so tragic that it became hysterical; with some of the ASSOC reps going bananas.

But in the end the turn out was quite good, just... why was it that a whole lot of you first years insisted on waiting until the very last minute before paying for tickets?

With that out of the way, we were finally able to let our hair down and have a good night. Most people arrived punctually and were enjoying the pre-dinner drinks (sorry there was no alcohol outside, but how many of you would have rocked up on time if you knew that fact?). We were fortunate enough to have Helen Martin and Carolyn McLulich from the Institute of Actuaries Australia, the main sponsor of the Dinner, mingling during this time. Special mention should also be made for Zurich and Classic Solutions, which were our other sponsors.

With everyone stamped (sorry we had to brand you with the big mighty ASSOC stamp, but you should feel for the UNSW people who didn't have their own stamp and so also had to be branded "ASSOC" - they are ASOC with one "S") and a little bit of prodding we were able to get people inside and seated in time for the food to be served (OK, so we were pushing, but we seriously could not understand why you wanted to take photos outside when it was so much prettier inside! We actually had to jump into people's photos and consequently ruin them in order to get people to go inside).

The band AfterHours played during dinner and was a touch loud, which

was only a good thing as it disallowed people to talk while they ate. Lucky for that because the food was absolutely delicious! (Ahem). Well the pumpkin soup was delicious, the tomato cheese thing was okay (it tasted like nothing, but at least that's better than tasting yuck) and the desserts were yummy – especially the “Mocha Torte” (the coffee flavoured cake that is). But the chicken... in the end people just gave up on asking what was in the risotto, if in fact it was actually cooked properly, and instead resorted to swallowing it down – no wonder why the bar tab finished so quickly.

There will always be complaints about the food, but luckily most people didn't attend the Dinner for the food (as ironic as that sounds). Instead, most people were itching to get onto the dance floor! In fact, the DJ got countless requests to “put on the loud music already!” Soon enough the music came, and we found it was mostly R'n'B, which meant that it was only really good to dance to if you had a partner. *Sigh*... Still, everyone made the most of it and seeing as half the people were drunk silly, it didn't take a lot of effort to have a good time on the dance floor.

We found that the secret to looking approachable was to walk across the room holding an armful of giveaways. Suddenly everyone knew us, said hello to us and smiled at us nicely in hope to be given a box of chocolates, a Catchabubble blower (which no one ended up blowing anyway), or even a Freddo Frog. However, there were others that just came up

to us and demanded to be given something, whilst the most savvy of them all (being the guys that sat on our table) decided it would be wise to steal whatever they could get their hands on from the giveaways bag (don't worry though, we got nearly all of it back).

Food, drinks, music, dancing, giveaways... all of these contributed to a fun night. However, the most important contribution to the night was, without a doubt, all of you that attended. For those of you who weren't able to make it, hopefully we'll see you at next year's Dinner, but for those of you who were a part of the amazing night, we hope you had a blast and we look forward to partying with you again next year!

Finally, we are going to break the ASSOC tradition of merely saying thankyou to the “whole committee” with the excuse of there being too many people to mention. Instead, we are going to individually list all of the people that are worthy of being thanked. (The editor will love us for taking up so much space – [editor says, thanx guys!!!]). We would like to warn that this may be a bit boring for some people - the rest of this article is going to be analogous to the credits at the end of a movie. So if you are one of those people who walk out while the credits are rolling, then by all means stop reading, but for anyone who is seriously bored, you may find the following entertaining.

We'd like to thank:

- ★ Tony for looking after the sponsorship.
- ★ Prashan for his ingenious idea and creativity behind the posters and slide.
- ★ Danny for doing the cool animation thing on the website
- ★ Allen, Faro, Simon, Yi-Nan, Ivan and Darren for all of their hard work in selling the tickets and for setting up the non-existent stall.
- ★ A **small** thank you to Emily and Lin for being able to drag along **some** of their group
- ★ William, Anny and Kevin for all their help in organising the event. In particular, for their profound knowledge when shopping with us ("Think about it – 300 balloons isn't going to fill up the whole ceiling"). A second thanks to Will for assuring us that the ceiling was not more than 10 metres high, and to Kev for letting us use his credit card – hope you liked your Barbie present.
- ★ John and Fu Ken for driving us to the hotel early and helping out with decorating even though they're not on the committee. Special thanks to Fu for finding the fastest way of tying a balloon and putting the ribbon onto it at the same time, and John for amusing us by making use of the excess helium in a childish manner (though he didn't do it very well)
- ★ Albert and Yao for helping resolve the lollipop crisis

(and subsequently eating or pulling the tops off them). Also Suze says sorry to Albert for picking on him for the whole night (even though I didn't)

- ★ The bunch of people who came along early to help – Ellaine, Allen, Jeff, James, Faro, Andy and David – Sorry we couldn't find things for some of you to do (it was only because we had everything under control!)
- ★ Lastly (but most importantly!) Simon, who by now probably has nightmares about organising Annual Dinners. Thanks for pulling everything together, and sorry for the mass emails, for Rosie's threat, for throwing stars into your hair and for getting your car smashed.

With a bit of luck the night was as worthwhile for all those that were involved in organising it as it was for us. Despite the headaches and heart attacks, we still had a lot of fun doing it and we're already anticipating next year's Dinner. See you all then!

Rosanna Lam & Sussam Lam

Constellation – The Annual Dinner



Kolmogorov

1903-1987 ~ Andrey Nikolayevich Kolmogorov (Andrei Nikolaevich)

When you were five years old... did you ever realise this pattern? $1=1^2$, $1+3=2^2$, $1+3+5=3^2$, etc. Well, Kolmogorov, a Russian Mathematician certainly did. It was his first mathematical discovery!

Andrey Nikolayevich Kolmogorov is considered one of the most eminent mathematicians of the twentieth century. Being a probabilist and educator, Kolmogorov has enriched and contributed significantly to not only the field of mathematics, but also a diverse range of applied sciences. He is known as “the founder of modern probability theory” due to his development of the axiomatic foundations on the theory of probability. His advances in stochastic processes were remarkable and his pedagogical efforts were notable.

Kolmogorov was born on 25 April 1903 in central Russia. His father, a professional agriculturalist, was killed in World War I. His mother, not formally married, died during his birth. Adopted by his mother’s sister, he and his friends attended a school run by his aunts. In 1920, he enrolled in Moscow University and during this time, he worked as a secondary school teacher to cover his living expenses. It was said that he had been more proud of that work as a teacher than the honours he later gained from his academic achievements. By 1922,

he had finished his study on sets and their operations, which was later published in 1928. He graduated in 1925, obtained a doctoral degree and became a research associate at the University. In 1929, he published the well known paper, “General Theory of Measure and Probability Theory.” In the paper, he constructed the axiomatic representations of probability theory and laid the foundations on continuous-time random Markov processes. He explored the theory on chains of linked probabilities and defined conditional expectation.


In 1931, Kolmogorov became a professor of mathematics. Within two years, he became the director for the Institute of Mathematics. In the meantime, he had done extensive work on probability theory which was later translated into English as “The Foundations of the Theory of Probability.” In 1937, he was appointed as Chair of Theory of Probability in the University. In 1939, he became an academician, and later academician-secretary of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. During World War II, he contributed to the protection of Moscow from the Nazi bombing by solving statistical problems relating to artillery fire. Applying stochastic theory, he determined the most effective placement of the barrage balloons. During the period from 1954 to 1957, he served as Dean of the Department of Mechanics and Mathematics. In


the late 1950s, many of his works involving probability theory were discovered by Western Mathematicians to have solved numerous issues that confronted them.


Kolmogorov helped to found the Soviet school of probability theory. He established many institutes and laboratories. In total, an estimate of 500 publications were made, including 18 mathematical papers written when he was a university student. He had received numerous awards and recognitions worldwide, including the State Prize, the Lenin Prize, the Order of the Red Banner, the Bolzano International Prize, and the Order of Lenin six times. In 1963, he retired and due to great interest in mathematical education, he soon played an important role in reforming mathematical education in the 1960s. His following 20 years was spent teaching high school students. He remained an active member of the faculty of the University until his death in Moscow in 1987, aged eighty-four.


Fun Stuff


You know you've studied too much actuarial studies when


 you hear the word "model" and you begin to draw up a Markov chain


 you must count 211 sheep before you fall asleep


 your favourite movie is the one you watched in ACST 151 about Equity Funding


 you get a sudden urge to rush to a bank and deposit \$10,000 just so that you can witness the power of compound interest over the next 40 years.


 you start using QBasic to calculate the probability of you finding true love


 you think the term "Half-Life" refers to half the expected life span of a new born baby


 you get a sudden urge to get married since you'd then get cheaper premiums for your insurance


 you bring a bomb with you onto any plane, so that the chance someone else does is significantly smaller.


 you want to change your name to Eric, because, somehow subconsciously, it sounds appropriate for you.


 You substitute Red Bull for water


 You refuse to travel by public transport until you work out the expected waiting time


 You need to replace your calculator battery nine times a year

 You dream of doing a '243' question and actually getting it right.

 Words which no longer appear in your vocabulary are: "fun", "leisure", "gym".

 You are asked for the time and your reply is to the nearest second.

 your favorite number is between 0 and 1

 you know the value of ${}^{13}C_4$ off the top of your head

Why did the chicken cross the road?
It had life insurance. (Use this only in extremely desperate circumstances)

Shepherd's π 2.5

What's an actuarial model?

- A. something that can predict the future
- B. a complicated series of equations which no one can understand except actuaries
- C. a person who thinks he is above everyone else because he can determine when people are going to die
- D. John Pollard

What's the difference between an actuary and a doctor?

- A. actuaries get more pay
- B. actuaries have more power
- C. actuaries are smarter
- D. actuaries can tell a person when they'll die before doctors

What's the million dollar question for actuarial students who completed first year?

- A. Will I get a credit for STAT 272?
- B. Will I get a credit for ACST 243?
- C. Which double degree should I continue with?
- D. Should Alan McHarg write a thesaurus?

What's the difference between an actuary and a zombie?

- A. Actuaries are smarter
- B. Actuaries have more power
- C. Actuaries get more pay
- D. Nothing

What is the difference between an actuary and a brick?

- A. a brick is more built
- B. a brick has a better chance of getting picked up
- C. a brick has more sex appeal

D. a brick doesn't pretend to know what combinatorics are

Which is the least sexy profession?

- A. Actuary - because we choose partners after analyzing their mortality
- B. Actuary - because we're all ugly (based on Schmidt)
- C. Actuary - because we used a pick up line involving the words Ito's lemma
- D. Actuary - because we don't know the meaning of sexy

Which of the following are terms related to Random Number generation?

- A. "Ratio of uniforms" method
- B. "Squaring the uniforms" method
- C. "Squaring the histogram" method
- D. "Robin Hood" allocation
- E. "Monty Python" method

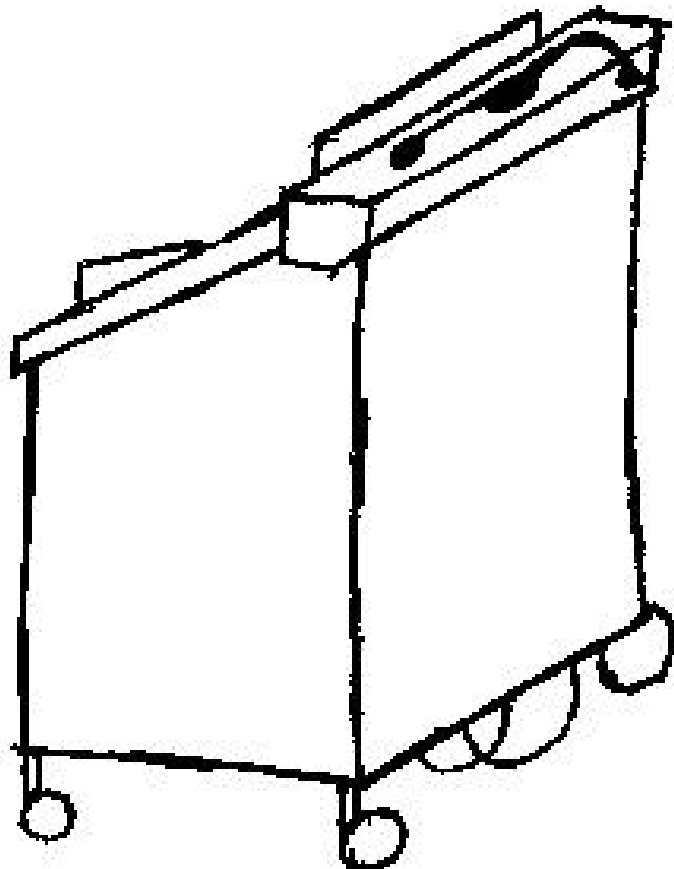
What is the difference between investment and gambling?

- A. There is no difference. In both cases people do it because they think they got skill.
- B. There is no difference. On average, you lose as much as you win in both actions.
- C. You can explain payoff outcomes in gambling, but you can't with investment.
- D. Investment can be a recognised science, gambling is not as recognised.

Not a Martingale

How much attention do you pay in lectures? Well here's a challenge... tell us what the item below is, in what lecture theatre or tutorial room it is in, and from which seat you have to be in to see this eXact view of it.

***Email your answer to
actualite@mqassoc.org***



The Actuary's Anthem

(To the tune of "Advance Australia Fair")

Actuaries all let us re-joice,
For we are young and free,
We've riches 'n' pow'r 'n' are ki-nd of
spoilt,
Our minds are deeper than seas;

Our home abounds in endless gifts,
Of beauty, rich and rare;
In his-t'ry's page, let ev'-ry stage
Increase actuary's fare,
In joy-ful strains then let us sing
Increase actuary's fare.

Be-side our ra-diant Oly-mpic pools,
We'll rest with hammocks and drinks,
To make this s'perior job of ours,
Be known to all the kids;

For those who've come a -cross the seas,
We've bound-less chores to give;
With cou-rage let us all combine to
Increase actuary's fare,
In joy-ful strains then let us sing
Increase actuary's fare.