How to approach the Advanced Taxation (ATX) exam

You will need a detailed knowledge of the ATX-UK syllabus. This includes assumed knowledge of technical areas brought forward from the TX-UK syllabus, which must be refreshed and updated for the examinable Finance Act (FA 2018).

Be aware that:

- All questions will be scenario-based
- All questions will contain a mixture of computational and discursive elements
- More than one topic area of the syllabus may be examined in each question
- Questions may involve
  - Consideration of more than one tax
  - Some elements of planning
  - The interaction of taxes

ATX – ‘Think more – write less’

Heed this mantra from the examining team to improve your performance.

- Requirements are everything – What have you been asked to do? What do you not need to do?
- How will you do what the requirement is asking? Planning your answers is crucial.
- Have you identified the relevant issues?
- Have you thought about the point you want to make, before you start writing? This will help you to write concisely.
- Make sure you know why you’re doing a particular calculation before you prepare it. Will it help you to answer the requirement?

Preparation advice from the examining team

- ‘Know your stuff’ – you must
  - Have thorough, precise knowledge of the entire syllabus
  - Refresh brought forward knowledge from the TX-UK syllabus for FA 2018
- Practice questions based on FA 2018
- Learn how to spot “triggers” which are there to point you towards the required answer
- Be prepared to answer questions on ethical issues
- Be ruthless in critiquing your answers

Tips for success in the ATX exam

- Identify all the requirements in the Section A case study questions in:
  - The requirements section
  - The document referenced in the scenario (e.g. e-mail from your manager)
- Allow sufficient time to analyse requirements into all constituent parts to ensure every part is answered e.g. September 2018 Question 3(c):
  - Advise Enid of the impact on the total amount of tax payable by herself and Niche Ltd and if she
    1. receives additional salary £15,000, or
    2. withdraws £15,000 from her loan account
- If given certain figures to use, do not waste time recalculating them
- Relate any calculation or discussion to the context in the given scenario
- Do not waste time addressing issues which have not been asked for
- Appreciate that professional skills are required throughout all answers to achieve high marks

Tackling the exam

Most frequently used ATX exam verbs:

- Prepare
- Calculate
- Explain

Read this article for more about exam verbs

These are not mutually exclusive, for example: “Prepare the following notes and calculations…”, “Calculate … with supporting explanations …” and “Explain … with supporting calculations …”

Writing a good answer – how to demonstrate professionalism:

Question 1 will include 4 professional marks, typically for a memo or notes to your tax manager. Marks may be awarded for:

- Overall presentation of the requested format
- The approach taken to problem solving
- Clarity of explanations and calculations
- Relevant advice
- Effectiveness of communication

Links to support resources

- Finance Act 2018
- ATX Study support guide
- Examiner’s approach article
- Passing Strategic Professional exams
- How to earn professional marks
- Ethics and Professional Skills module
- Past exam questions and answers
- Examiner’s reports