

Pensions and retirement planning

Purpose

At the end of this unit, candidates should be able to demonstrate an understanding of and ability to analyse:

- main tax and legal frameworks that govern retirement benefits under registered pension schemes;
- features of defined contribution and defined benefit pensions.

Summary of learning outcomes	Number of questions in the examination*
1. Understand the political, economic and social environment factors which provide the context for pensions planning	5 standard format
2. Understand how the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) tax regime applies to pensions planning	10 standard format
3. Understand the relevant aspects of pensions law and regulation to pensions planning	4 standard format
4. Understand the structure, characteristics and application of Defined Benefit (DB) schemes to an individual's pension planning	7 standard format
5. Analyse the range of Defined Contribution (DC) scheme options as they apply to an individual's pension planning	4 standard format/ 2 multiple response
6. Analyse the options and factors to consider for drawing pension benefits	5 standard format/ 4 multiple response
7. Explain the structure, relevance and application of State Schemes to an individual's pension planning	4 standard format
8. Evaluate the aims and objectives of retirement planning, including the relevant investment issues	5 multiple response

* The test specification has an in-built element of flexibility. It is designed to be used as a guide for study and is not a statement of actual number of questions that will appear in every exam. However, the number of questions testing each learning outcome will generally be within the range plus or minus 2 of the number indicated.

Important notes

- Method of assessment: 50 questions: 39 standard format and 11 multiple response questions. 1 hour is allowed for this examination.
- This syllabus will be examined from 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2027.
- Candidates will be examined on the basis of English law and practice in the tax year 2026/2027 unless otherwise stated.
- It should be assumed that all individuals have long-term UK residence status unless otherwise stated.
- This PDF document has been designed to be accessible with screen reader technology. If for accessibility reasons you require this document in an alternative format, please contact us on online.exams@cii.co.uk to discuss your needs.

1. Understand the political, economic and social environment factors which provide the context for pensions planning

- 1.1 Describe the role of Government, policy direction, challenges and reforms.
- 1.2 Describe corporate responsibilities, their challenges and impact on pension planning.
- 1.3 Describe demographic trends, longevity and the ageing population.
- 1.4 Describe incentives, disincentives and attitudes to saving.
- 1.5 Explain the main pension scheme types and methods of pension provision.

2. Understand how the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) tax regime applies to pensions planning

- 2.1 Explain how the HMRC tax regime applies to pensions planning – Contributions and tax relief; Pension scheme investment funds; Death benefits; Retirement benefits; Transitional reliefs.
- 2.2 Explain how the following are applied – Annual allowances; Tapering of the annual allowance; Lifetime allowance; Lump sum allowance; Lump sum and death benefit allowance; Overseas transfer allowance; Associated charges.
- 2.3 Outline the tax treatment of other types of schemes.

3. Understand the relevant aspects of pensions law and regulation to pensions planning

- 3.1 Explain the relevant aspects of pensions law and regulation.
- 3.2 Describe the role and duties of trustees and administrators of pension schemes.

4. Understand the structure, characteristics and application of Defined Benefit (DB) schemes to an individual's pension planning

- 4.1 Describe the main types, attributes and benefits of DB pension provision, including the rules and operation of DB schemes.
- 4.2 Outline the funding methods and related issues.
- 4.3 Explain the role of trustees and other parties, including scheme reporting.
- 4.4 Describe the factors to consider and the benefits on leaving, early and normal retirement, including the main transfer issues in broad terms.
- 4.5 Explain the benefits available on ill health and death.
- 4.6 Explain eligibility and top-up options.
- 4.7 Describe the structure, main attributes and benefits of public sector schemes.

5. Analyse the range of Defined Contribution (DC) scheme options as they apply to an individual's pension planning

- 5.1 Analyse the types of DC schemes, their main attributes and benefits.

- 5.2 Explain the legal bases of DC schemes and their impact on an individual's pension planning.
- 5.3 Outline the benefits on leaving, and death before and after age 75.
- 5.4 Outline transfer issues and considerations.

6. Analyse the options and factors to consider for drawing pension benefits

- 6.1 Analyse the options to consider in drawing State Retirement Benefits.
- 6.2 Analyse the options available from DB schemes for drawing pension benefits.
- 6.3 Analyse the options available from DC schemes for drawing pension benefits.
- 6.4 Analyse the suitability of phased retirement.
- 6.5 Explain the small pots and trivial commutation rules.

7. Explain the structure, relevance and application of State Schemes to an individual's pension planning

- 7.1 Explain the structure, relevance and application of State Retirement Benefits, State Death Benefits and the Pension Credit framework as part of an individual's pension planning.

8. Evaluate the aims and objectives of retirement planning, including the relevant investment issues

- 8.1 Evaluate the aims and objectives of retirement planning in relation to – An individual's aims, objectives and circumstances; Investments available to meet these objectives; Alternative sources of retirement income; Regular reviews and the factors affecting them; Asset allocation factors; The main characteristics of self-investment.

Additional Resources

The following resources may assist you with your studies.

Note: The examination will test the syllabus alone.

Supporting information for the syllabus can be found on the unit page via the CII website. The resources found here: www.cii.co.uk/learning will help you keep up-to-date with developments and provide a wider coverage of syllabus topics.

Additional reading material can also be found referenced in an appendix within the study text.

If you have a current study text enrolment, the current examination guide is included and is accessible via **RevisionMate** (www.cii.co.uk/login). Details of how to access RevisionMate are on the first page of your study text.

It is recommended that you study from the most recent versions of the examination guide.

Exam preparation

Exam preparation guidance and supporting exam documentation are available via the CII website: <https://www.cii.co.uk/learning/qualifications/assessment-information>.

Learning support

Pensions and retirement planning. London: CII. Study text R04.

Audio Revision, E-Learn, Key Facts Booklet and Knowledge Checker are included with Enrolment plus, or available at an additional cost (delivered via RevisionMate).

Revision Extra is available at an additional cost.

Supporting exam documents

Tax tables which are provided in your exam can be found here: www.cii.co.uk/learning/qualifications/assessment-information/before-the-exam/supporting-exam-documents/

Assessment information

Candidates should refer to the CII website for the latest information on changes to law and practice and when they will be examined:

1. Visit www.cii.co.uk/qualifications
2. Select the appropriate qualification
3. Select your unit from the list provided
4. Select qualification update on the right hand side of the page

Examination guide

The examination guide is available on the unit page via the CII website.