

Pension income options

Purpose

This unit enables financial planning professionals to develop knowledge and understanding of pension crystallisation and the drawing of income via various options.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, candidates will be able to:

Summary of learning outcomes	
1.	Understand the HMRC rules that apply when pension benefits are crystallised
2.	Understand the features, tax treatment and risks of lifetime annuities and scheme pensions
3.	Understand the features, tax treatment and risks of flexible benefit options
4.	Understand the features, tax treatment and risks of phasing retirement benefits
5.	Understand the regulatory requirements and legal framework designed to protect clients who are drawing pension benefits
6.	Understand the State retirement benefits available
7.	Understand the issues in giving initial and ongoing advice to clients on taking pension benefits

Important notes

- 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.
- The general rule is that exams are based on the English legislative position three months before the date of the exams.
- 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/learning/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

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1. Understand the HMRC rules that apply when pension benefits are crystallised

- 1.1 Lifetime allowance (LTA) abolishment, valuation factors, transitional reliefs;
- 1.2 Pension age, including the minimum pension age, contractual and protected retirement ages;
- 1.3 Pension commencement lump sum (PCLS) and uncrystallised funds pensions lump sum (UFPLS) limits, including the Lump Sum Allowance (LSA), Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance (LSDBA) and transitional protections;
- 1.4 Relevant benefit crystallisation events (RBCs), including valuations and calculations;
- 1.5 Commutation of benefits, including triviality and small pots;
- 1.6 Requirements for drawing benefits on the grounds of ill health and interaction with the Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance (LSDBA);
- 1.7 Annual allowance, including money purchase annual allowance, carry forward of unused allowance, valuation factors and tax charges.

2. Understand the features, tax treatment and risks of lifetime annuities and scheme pensions

- 2.1 Definition, HMRC requirements and main features, including lifetime annuities, scheme pensions, commutation and pension increase exchange (PIE), and taxation of benefits in payment;
- 2.2 Annuities: annuity market and types of annuities, including conventional, flexible, investment linked, enhanced and impaired life;
- 2.3 The benefits payable on death and their tax treatment, including the Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance (LSDBA).

3. Understand the features, tax treatment and risks of flexible benefit options

- 3.1 Definition, HMRC requirements, and main features, including capped drawdown, flexi-access drawdown (FAD), short-term annuities, and the risks of non-annuity pension options;
- 3.2 Drawdown to drawdown transfers;
- 3.3 The benefits payable on death and their tax treatment, including the Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance (LSDBA).

4. Understand the features, tax treatment and risks of phasing retirement benefits

- 4.1 Phasing retirement using secure and flexible options, including flexi-access drawdown, capped drawdown, uncrystallised funds pension lump sum (UFPLS), including the Lump Sum Allowance (LSA) and Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance (LSDBA) and annuities;
- 4.2 How target income will be achieved by lump sum and income payments including calculations;
- 4.3 The benefits payable on death and their tax treatment, including the Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance (LSDBA).

5. Understand the regulatory requirements and legal framework designed to protect clients who are drawing pension benefits

- 5.1 FCA – Conduct of Business Sourcebook (COBS), including but not limited to pensions guidance, retirement risk warnings, illustrations and investment pathways;
- 5.2 Money and Pension Service guidance body, including but not limited to Pension Wise and the guidance guarantee;
- 5.3 Security of members benefits, including Pension Protection Fund, Financial Assistance Scheme and Financial Services Compensation Scheme;
- 5.4 TPR transfer guidance, including pension scams.

6. Understand the State retirement benefits available

- 6.1 The new State Pension: calculating the foundation amount, eligibility through National Insurance contributions and credits, amounts payable and annual increases;
- 6.2 Ability to increase the State Pension by paying Class 3 NICs;
- 6.3 State Pension age (SPA): equalisation of male and female ages and subsequent increases to SPA;
- 6.4 State retirement benefits for those who reached SPA before 6 April 2016;
- 6.5 Deferring the State Pension;
- 6.6 State Pension Credit;
- 6.7 Payment of State retirement benefits to pensioners living overseas;
- 6.8 Benefits payable by the State on death.

7. Understand the issues in giving initial and ongoing advice to clients on taking pension benefits

- 7.1 The importance of establishing a client's personal and financial circumstances and requirements including but not limited to, attitude to investment risk, capacity for loss, longevity including life expectancy probability and investment strategies in retirement;
- 7.2 The factors that should be considered when advising on the suitability or otherwise of a transfer out of a defined benefit scheme at the point of retirement including: Personal recommendation; Appropriate Pension Transfer Analysis (APTA) & Transfer Value Comparator (TVC); Attitude to transfer risk; Safeguarded and non safeguarded benefits, including money purchase AVCs;
- 7.3 The factors that should be considered when advising on the suitability or otherwise of a transfer between money purchase arrangements, including: Guaranteed annuity rates (GAR); Protected tax free cash; Flexibility options within the contracts; Investment choices, including discretionary fund managers;
- 7.4 The choice between the different methods for drawing a pension income and/or lump sum and the Income Tax planning considerations (both State and private);

- 7.5 The importance of cashflow modelling, including stress testing, life expectancy, sequencing risk and the safe withdrawal rate;
- 7.6 Identifying the annuity options which may be suitable for the client;
- 7.7 Intergenerational planning: nominations, Inheritance Tax planning, spousal bypass trusts;
- 7.8 Non pension assets as an alternative means of providing income, including property, ISAs and other investments;
- 7.9 Impact of pension on divorce settlements (offsetting, pension sharing and earmarking) upon retirement and on death;
- 7.10 The factors to be taken into account during annual reviews.

Available Resources

The following list provides details of further resources which may assist you with your studies.

Note: The examination will test the syllabus alone.

The resources listed 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(s).

Learning support

Pension income options. London: CII. Study text J05.

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

Revision Courses Training courses.

Exam papers and test specifications

The last two exam papers and test specifications for review and practice can be found: www.cii.co.uk/learning/qualifications/assessment-information/before-the-exam/exam-papers-and-test-specifications/

Supporting exam documents

Additional information which is provided in your exam can be found here:

www.cii.co.uk/learning/qualifications/assessment-information/before-the-exam/supporting-exam-documents

Examination guide

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

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>.