

Think Ahead

ACCA

September 2018
to
June 2019

Strategic Business Reporting (SBR)

Syllabus and study guide

The structure of the syllabus and study guide

Relational diagram of Strategic Business Reporting with other exams

This diagram shows direct and indirect links between this exam and other exams preceding or following it. Some exams are directly underpinned by others such as Advanced Performance Management by Performance Management. These links are shown as solid line arrows. Other exams only have indirect relationships with each other such as links existing between the accounting and auditing exams. The links between these are shown as dotted line arrows. This diagram indicates where you are expected to have underpinning knowledge and where it would be useful to review previous learning before undertaking study.

Overall aim of the syllabus

This explains briefly the overall objective of the syllabus and indicates in the broadest sense the capabilities to be developed within the paper.

Main capabilities

The aim of this syllabus is broken down into several main capabilities which divide the syllabus and study guide into discrete sections.

Relational diagram of the main capabilities

This diagram illustrates the flows and links between the main capabilities (sections) of the syllabus and should be

used as an aid to planning teaching and learning in a structured way.

Syllabus rationale

This is a narrative explaining how the syllabus is structured and how the main capabilities are linked. The rationale also explains in further detail what the examination intends to assess and why.

Detailed syllabus

This shows the breakdown of the main capabilities (sections) of the syllabus into subject areas. This is the blueprint for the detailed study guide.

Approach to examining the syllabus

This section briefly explains the structure of the examination and how it is assessed.

Study Guide

This is the main document that students, learning and content providers should use as the basis of their studies, instruction and materials. Examinations will be based on the detail of the study guide which comprehensively identifies what could be assessed in any examination session. The study guide is a precise reflection and breakdown of the syllabus. It is divided into sections based on the main capabilities identified in the syllabus. These sections are divided into subject areas which relate to the sub-capabilities included in the detailed syllabus. Subject areas are broken down into sub-headings which describe the detailed outcomes that could be assessed in examinations. These outcomes are described using verbs indicating what exams may require students to demonstrate, and the

broad intellectual level at which these may need to be demonstrated (*see intellectual levels below).

Intellectual Levels

The syllabus is designed to progressively broaden and deepen the knowledge, skills and professional values demonstrated by the student on their way through the qualification.

The specific capabilities within the detailed syllabuses and study guides are assessed at one of three intellectual or cognitive levels:

Level 1:	Knowledge and comprehension
Level 2:	Application and analysis
Level 3:	Synthesis and evaluation

Very broadly, these intellectual levels relate to the three cognitive levels at which the Applied Knowledge, the Applied Skills and the Strategic Professional exams are assessed.

Each subject area in the detailed study guide included in this document is given a 1, 2, or 3 superscript, denoting intellectual level, marked at the end of each relevant line. This gives an indication of the intellectual depth at which an area could be assessed within the examination. However, while level 1 broadly equates with Applied Knowledge, level 2 equates to Applied Skills level 3 to Strategic Professional, some lower level skills can continue to be assessed as the student progresses through each level. This reflects that at each stage of study there will be a requirement to broaden, as well as deepen capabilities. It is also possible that occasionally some higher level capabilities may be assessed at lower levels.

Learning Hours and Education Recognition

The ACCA qualification does not prescribe or recommend any particular number of learning hours for examinations because study and learning patterns and styles vary greatly between people and organisations. This also recognises the wide diversity of personal, professional and educational circumstances in which ACCA students find themselves.

As a member of the International Federation of Accountants, ACCA seeks to enhance the education recognition of its qualification on both national and international education frameworks, and with educational authorities and partners globally. In doing so, ACCA aims to ensure that its qualifications are recognized and valued by governments, regulatory authorities and employers across all sectors. To this end, ACCA qualifications are currently recognized on the education frameworks in several countries. Please refer to your national education framework regulator for further information.

Each syllabus contains between 23 and 35 main subject area headings depending on the nature of the subject and how these areas have been broken down.

Guide to Exam Structure

The structure of examinations varies within and between levels.

The Applied Knowledge examinations contain 100% compulsory questions to encourage candidates to study across the breadth of each syllabus.

The Applied Knowledge exams are assessed by equivalent two-hour computer based and paper based examinations.

The *Corporate and Business Law* exam is a two-hour computer based objective test examination also available as a paper based version.

The other Applied Skills examinations F5-F9 contain a mix of objective and longer type questions with a duration of three hours for 100 marks, these questions directly contribute towards the candidate result. These exams are available in computer-based and paper-based formats. Prior to the start of each exam there will be time allocated for students to be informed of the exam instructions.

Computer-based exams

For computer-based exams candidates will be delivered an extra 10 marks of objective test content (either 5 objective test questions of one case), candidates are given an extra 20 minutes. These questions are included to ensure fairness, reliability and security of exams. These questions do not directly contribute towards the candidate's score. Candidates will not be able to differentiate between the questions that contribute to the result and those that do not. All questions have been subject to ACCA's regulatory approved quality assurance process.

The total exam time is therefore 3 hours and 20 minutes. Prior to the start of the exam candidates are given an extra 10 minutes to read the exam instructions.

Paper-based exams

For paper-based exams 15 minutes are added to the three hours to reflect the manual effort required as compared to computer-based exams. All paper questions are part of the computer-based exam and so have been subject to the same quality assurance process. There will be time awarded by the invigilator to read the exam instructions.

Strategic Business Leader is ACCA's case study examination at the Strategic Professional level and is examined as a closed book exam of four hours, including reading planning and reflection time which can be used flexibly within the examination. There is no pre-seen information and all exam related material, including case information and exhibits are available within the examination. Strategic Business leader is an exam based on one main business scenario which involves candidates completing several tasks within which additional material may be introduced. All questions are compulsory and each examination will contain a total of 80 technical marks and 20 Professional Skills marks. The detail of the structure of this exam is described in the Strategic Business Leader syllabus and study guide document.

The other Strategic Professional exams are all of three hours and 15 minutes duration. All contain two Sections and all questions are compulsory. These exams all contain four professional marks. The detail of the structure of each of these exams is described in the individual syllabus documents.

ACCA encourages students to take time to read questions carefully and to plan answers but once the exam time has started, there are no additional restrictions as to when candidates may start writing in their answer books.

Time should be taken to ensure that all the information and exam requirements are properly read and understood.

The pass mark for all ACCA Qualification examination papers is 50%.

Guide to Examination Assessment

ACCA reserves the right to examine anything contained within the study guide at any examination session. This includes knowledge, techniques, principles, theories, and concepts as specified. For the financial accounting, audit and assurance, law and tax papers except where indicated otherwise, ACCA will publish *examinable documents* once a year to indicate exactly what regulations and legislation could potentially be assessed within identified examination sessions.

For paper based examinations regulation **issued** or legislation **passed** on or before 1 September annually, will be examinable from 1 September of the following year to 31 August^t of the year after that. Please refer to the examinable documents for the exam (where relevant) for further information.

Regulation issued or legislation passed in accordance with the above dates may be examinable even if the **effective** date is in the future.

The term issued or passed relates to when regulation or legislation has been formally approved.

The term effective relates to when regulation or legislation must be applied to an entity transactions and business practices.

The study guide offers more detailed guidance on the depth and level at which the examinable documents will be examined. The study guide should therefore be read in conjunction with the examinable documents list.

This syllabus and study guide is designed to help with planning study and to provide detailed information on what could be assessed in any examination session.

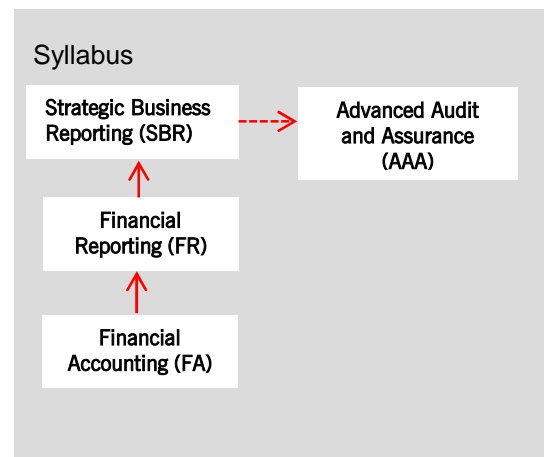
Syllabus

Aim

To discuss, apply and evaluate the concepts, principles and practices that underpin the preparation and interpretation of corporate reports in various contexts including the ethical assessment of managements' stewardship and the information needs of a diverse group of stakeholders.

Relational diagram

This diagram shows direct and indirect links between this exam and other exams preceding or following it. Some exams are directly underpinned by other exams such as Advanced Performance Management by Performance Management. These links are shown as solid line arrows. Other exams only have indirect relationships with each other such as links existing between the accounting and auditing papers. The links between these are shown as dotted line arrows. This diagram indicates where you are expected to have underpinning knowledge and where it would be useful to review previous learning before undertaking study.



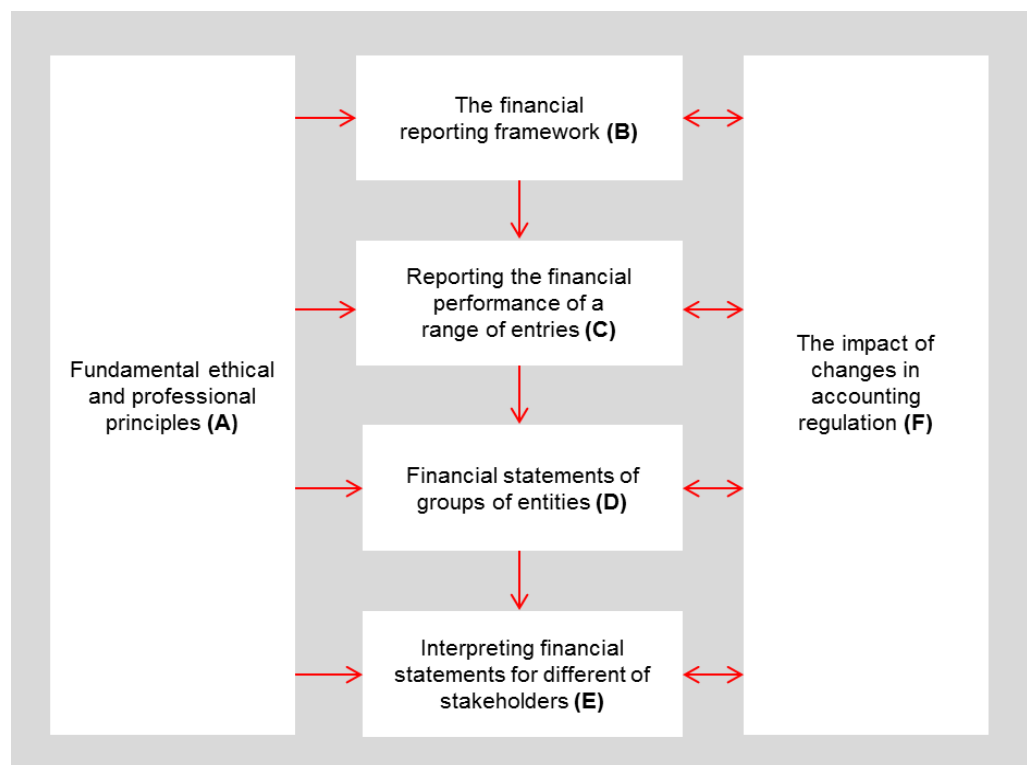
Main capabilities

On successful completion of this paper, candidates should be able to:

- A Apply fundamental ethical and professional principles to ethical dilemmas and discuss the consequences of unethical behaviour
- B Evaluate the appropriateness of the financial reporting framework and critically discuss changes in accounting regulation
- C Apply professional judgement in the reporting of the financial performance of a range of entities

NOTE the learning outcomes in Section C of the syllabus can apply to: single entities, groups, public sector entities and not-for profit entities (where appropriate)

- D Prepare the financial statements of groups of entities
- E Interpret financial statements for different stakeholders
- F Communicate the impact of changes and potential changes in accounting regulation on financial reporting



This diagram illustrates the flows and links between the main capabilities (sections) of the syllabus and should be used as an aid to planning teaching and learning in a structured way.

Rationale

The syllabus for *Strategic Business Reporting*, assumes knowledge acquired at the Fundamentals level including the core technical capabilities to prepare and analyse financial reports for single and combined entities.

The syllabus requires students to examine corporate reporting from a number of perspectives, not only from the point of view of the preparer of corporate reports, but also from the perspective of a variety of different stakeholders such as finance providers. The syllabus further requires the assessment and evaluation of the reporting decisions made by management and their implications for a range of stakeholders and entities. It also explores the professional and ethical responsibilities of the accountant to these stakeholders.

The subject matter of the syllabus requires students to have a cohesive understanding of the IASB's Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting and to use the Framework as a basis for judgement in applying International Financial Reporting Standards in corporate reports. The syllabus considers both the principles and practices of IFRS and uses these principles as a basis for the preparation of the financial statements of single entities and groups.

The syllabus requires students to reflect on the usefulness of corporate reports to stakeholders including developments in narrative reporting such as Integrated Reporting and to discuss the nature of the information that would help stakeholders assess the future prospects of the entity. This involves the

analysis and interpretation of corporate reports, and the provision of advice on the reporting implications of transactions.

The final section of the syllabus addresses current developments in corporate reporting and the implications of any potential changes. This includes a discussion of the deficiencies of existing accounting standards and the ability to explain the implications for a business and its stakeholders of significant changes to reporting frameworks.

Detailed syllabus and exam format

A Fundamental ethical and professional principles

1. Professional behaviour and compliance with accounting standards
2. Ethical requirements of corporate reporting and the consequences of unethical behaviour

B The financial reporting framework

1. The applications, strengths and weaknesses of the accounting framework

C Reporting the financial performance of a range of entities

1. Revenue
2. Non-current assets
3. Financial instruments
4. Leases
5. Employee benefits
6. Income taxes
7. Provisions, contingencies and events after the reporting date
8. Share-based payment
9. Fair Value Measurement
10. Reporting requirements of small and medium-sized entities (SMEs)
11. Other reporting issues

D Financial statements of groups of entities

1. Group accounting including statements of cash flows
2. Associates and joint arrangements
3. Changes in group structures
4. Foreign transactions and entities

E Interpret financial statements for different stakeholders

1. Analysis and interpretation of financial information and measurement of performance

F The impact of changes and potential changes in accounting regulation

1. Discussion of solutions to current issues in financial reporting

Approach to examining the syllabus

The syllabus is assessed by a three-hour fifteen minute paper-based examination. It examines professional competences within the business reporting environment.

Students will be examined on concepts, theories, and principles, and on their ability to question and comment on proposed accounting treatments.

Students should be capable of relating professional issues to relevant concepts and practical situations. The evaluation of alternative accounting practices and the identification and prioritisation of issues will be a key element of the exam. Professional and ethical judgement will need to be exercised, together with the integration of technical knowledge when addressing business reporting issues in a business context.

Students will be required to adopt either a stakeholder or an external focus in answering questions and to demonstrate personal skills such as problem solving, dealing with information and decision making. Students will also have to demonstrate communication skills appropriate to the scenario.

The paper also deals with specific professional knowledge appropriate to the preparation and presentation of consolidated and other financial statements from accounting data, to conform with accounting standards.

The paper will comprise two sections.

Section A 2 compulsory questions	50 marks
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Section B 2 compulsory questions of	
25 marks each	<u>50 marks</u>

100 marks

Section A

Section A will consist of two scenario based questions that will total 50 marks. The first question will be based on the financial statements of group entities, or extracts thereof (syllabus area D), and is also likely to require consideration of some financial reporting issues (syllabus area C). Candidates should understand that in addition to

the consideration of the numerical aspects of group accounting (max 25 marks), a discussion and explanation of these numbers will also be required. The second question in Section A will require candidates to consider the reporting implications and the ethical implications of specific events in a given scenario.

Section B

Students will be required to answer a further two questions in Section B, which may be scenario or case-study or essay based and will contain both discursive and computational elements. Section B could deal with any aspect of the syllabus but will always include either a full question, or part of a question, that requires the appraisal of financial and/or non-financial information from either the preparer's or another stakeholder's perspective.

Two professional marks will be awarded to both the ethical issues question in Section A and the question in Section B that requires analysis.

Current issues

The current issues element of the paper (syllabus area F) may be examined in Section A or B but will not be a full question; it is more likely to form part of another question.

Study Guide

A. Fundamental ethical and professional principles

1. Professional behaviour and compliance with accounting standards

- a) Appraise and discuss the ethical and professional issues in advising on corporate reporting.^[3]
- b) Assess the relevance and importance of ethical and professional issues in complying with accounting standards.^[3]

2. Ethical requirements of corporate reporting and the consequences of unethical behaviour

- a) Appraise the potential ethical implications of professional and managerial decisions in the preparation of corporate reports.^[3]
- b) Assess the consequences of not upholding ethical principles in the preparation of corporate reports.^[3]
- c) Identify related parties and assess the implications of related party relationships in the preparation of corporate reports.^[3]

B. The financial reporting framework

1. The applications, strengths and weaknesses of an accounting framework

- a) Discuss the importance of a conceptual framework in underpinning the production of accounting standards.^[3]

- b) Discuss the objectives of financial reporting including disclosure of information that can be used to help assess management's stewardship of the entity's resources and the limitations of financial reporting.^[3]
- c) Discuss the nature of the qualitative characteristics of useful financial information.^[3]
- d) Explain the roles of prudence and substance over form in financial reporting.^[3]
- e) Discuss the high level of measurement uncertainty that can make financial information less relevant.^[3]
- f) Evaluate the decisions made by management on recognition, derecognition and measurement.^[3]
- g) Critically discuss and apply the definitions of the elements of financial statements and the reporting of items in the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income.^[3]

C. Reporting the financial performance of a range of entities

1. Revenue

- a) Discuss and apply the criteria that must be met before an entity can apply the revenue recognition model.^[3]
- b) Discuss and apply the five step model relating to revenue earned from a contract with a customer.^[3]
- c) Apply the criteria for recognition of contract costs as an asset.^[3]

- d) Discuss and apply the recognition and measurement of revenue including performance obligations satisfied over time, sale with a right of return, warranties, variable consideration, principal versus agent considerations and non-refundable up-front fees.^[3]

2. Non-current assets

- a) Discuss and apply the recognition, derecognition and measurement of non-current assets including impairments and revaluations.^[3]
- b) Discuss and apply the accounting requirements for the classification and measurement of non-current assets held for sale.^[3]
- c) Discuss and apply the accounting treatment of investment properties including classification, recognition, measurement and change of use.^[3]
- d) Discuss and apply the accounting treatment of intangible assets including the criteria for recognition and measurement subsequent to acquisition.^[3]
- e) Discuss and apply the accounting treatment for borrowing costs.^[2]

3. Financial Instruments

- a) Discuss and apply the initial recognition and measurement of financial instruments.^[3]
- b) Discuss and apply the subsequent measurement of financial assets and financial liabilities.^[3]
- c) Discuss and apply the derecognition of financial assets and financial liabilities.^[2]

- d) Discuss and apply the reclassification of financial assets.^[2]

- e) Account for derivative financial instruments, and simple embedded derivatives.^[2]

- f) Outline and apply the qualifying criteria for hedge accounting and account for fair value hedges and cash flow hedges including hedge effectiveness.^[2]

- g) Discuss and apply the general approach to impairment of financial instruments including the basis for estimating expected credit losses.^[2]

- h) Discuss the implications of a significant increase in credit risk.^[2]

- i) Discuss and apply the treatment of purchased or originated credit impaired financial assets.^[2]

4. Leases

- a) Discuss and apply the lessee accounting requirements for leases including the identification of a lease and the measurement of the right of use asset and liability.^[3]
- b) Discuss and apply the accounting for leases by lessors.^[3]
- c) Discuss and apply the circumstances where there may be re-measurement of the lease liability.^[3]
- d) Discuss and apply the reasons behind the separation of the components of a lease contract into lease and non-lease elements.^[3]
- e) Discuss the recognition exemptions under the current leasing standard.^[3]

- f) Discuss and apply the principles behind accounting for sale and leaseback transactions.^[3]

5. Employee benefits

- a) Discuss and apply the accounting treatment of short term and long term employee benefits and defined contribution and defined benefit plans.^[3]
- b) Account for gains and losses on settlements and curtailments.^[2]
- c) Account for the “Asset Ceiling” test and the reporting of actuarial gains and losses.^[2]

6. Income taxes

- a) Discuss and apply the recognition and measurement of deferred tax liabilities and deferred tax assets.^[3]
- b) Discuss and apply the recognition of current and deferred tax as income or expense.^[3]
- c) Discuss and apply the treatment of deferred taxation on a business combination.^[2]

7. Provisions, contingencies and events after the reporting date

- a) Discuss and apply the recognition, de-recognition and measurement of provisions, contingent liabilities and contingent assets including environmental provisions and restructuring provisions.^[3]
- b) Discuss and apply the accounting for events after the reporting period.^[3]

8. Share based payment

- a) Discuss and apply the recognition and measurement of share-based payment transactions.^[3]
- b) Account for modifications, cancellations and settlements of share-based payment transactions.^[2]

9. Fair Value Measurement

- a) Discuss and apply the definitions of ‘fair value’ measurement and ‘active market’.^[3]
- b) Discuss and apply the ‘fair value hierarchy’.^[3]
- c) Discuss and apply the principles of highest and best use, most advantageous and principal market.^[3]
- d) Explain the circumstances where an entity may use a valuation technique.^[3]

10. Reporting requirements of small and medium-sized entities (SMEs)

- a) Discuss the key differences in accounting treatment between full IFRS and the IFRS for SMEs.^[3]
- b) Discuss and apply the simplifications introduced by IFRS for SMEs.^[3]

11. Other reporting issues

- a) Discuss and apply the accounting for, and disclosure of, government grants and other forms of government assistance.^[2]
- b) Discuss and apply the principles behind the initial recognition and subsequent measurement of a

biological asset or agricultural produce.^[2]

- c) Outline the principles behind the application of accounting policies and measurement in interim reports.^[2]
- d) Discuss and apply the judgements required in selecting and applying accounting policies, accounting for changes in estimates and reflecting corrections of prior period errors.^[3]

D. Financial statements of groups of entities

1. Group accounting including statements of cash flows

- a) Discuss and apply the principles behind determining whether a business combination has occurred.^[2]
- b) Discuss and apply the method of accounting for a business combination including identifying an acquirer and the principles in determining the cost of a business combination.^[2]
- c) Apply the recognition and measurement criteria for identifiable acquired assets and liabilities including contingent amounts and intangible assets.^[3]
- d) Discuss and apply the accounting for goodwill and non-controlling interest.^[3]
- e) Apply the accounting principles relating to a business combination achieved in stages.^[3]
- f) Discuss and apply the application of the control principle.^[2]

- g) Determine and apply appropriate procedures to be used in preparing consolidated financial statements.^[3]
- h) Discuss and apply the implications of changes in ownership interest and loss of control.^[3]
- i) Prepare group financial statements where activities have been discontinued, or have been acquired or disposed of in the period.^[3]
- j) Discuss and apply the treatment of a subsidiary which has been acquired exclusively with a view to subsequent disposal.^[2]
- k) Identify and outline:
 - the circumstances in which a group is required to prepare consolidated financial statements.^[2]
 - the circumstances when a group may claim and exemption from the preparation of consolidated financial statements.^[2]
 - why directors may not wish to consolidate a subsidiary and where this is permitted.^[2]
- l) Prepare and discuss group statements of cash flows.^[3]

2. Associates and joint arrangements

- a) Identify associate entities.^[3]
- b) Discuss and apply the equity method of accounting for associates.^[3]
- c) Apply the method of accounting for associates.^[3]
- d) Discuss and apply the application of the joint control principle.^[3]
- e) Discuss and apply the classification of joint arrangements.^[3]

- f) Prepare the financial statements of parties to the joint arrangement.^[3]

3. Changes in group structures

- a) Discuss and apply accounting for group companies in the separate financial statements of the parent company.^[2]
- b) Apply the accounting principles where the parent reorganises the structure of the group by establishing a new entity or changing the parent.^[2]

4. Foreign transactions and entities

- a) Outline and apply the translation of foreign currency amounts and transactions into the functional currency and the presentational currency.^[3]
- b) Account for the consolidation of foreign operations and their disposal.^[3]

E. Interpret financial statements for different stakeholders

1. Analysis and interpretation of financial information and measurement of performance

- a) Discuss and apply relevant indicators of financial and non-financial performance including earnings per share and additional performance measures.^[3]
- b) Discuss the increased demand for transparency in corporate reports, and the emergence of non-financial reporting standards.^[3]
- c) Appraise the impact of environmental, social, and ethical

factors on performance measurement.^[3]

- d) Discuss the current framework for integrated reporting (IR) including the objectives, concepts, guiding principles and content of an Integrated Report.^[3]
- e) Determine the nature and extent of reportable segments.^[3]
- f) Discuss the nature of segment information to be disclosed and how segmental information enhances the quality and sustainability of performance.^[3]

F The impact of changes and potential changes in accounting regulation

1. Discussion of solutions to current issues in financial reporting

- a) Discuss and apply the accounting implications of the first time adoption of new accounting standards.^[2]
- b) Identify issues and deficiencies which have led to proposed changes to an accounting standard.^[3]
- c) Discuss the impact of current issues in corporate reporting. The following examples are relevant to the current syllabus.^[3]:
 1. the revision of the Conceptual Framework
 2. The IASB's Principles of Disclosure Initiative
 3. Materiality in the context of financial reporting
 4. Primary Financial Statements
 5. Management commentary
 6. Developments in sustainability reporting

- d) Discuss developments in devising a structure for corporate reporting that addresses the needs of stakeholders.^[3]

Summary of changes to Strategic Business Reporting (SBR)

ACCA periodically reviews its qualification syllabuses so that they fully meet the needs of stakeholders such as employers, students, regulatory and advisory bodies and learning providers.

The main areas which have been added to the syllabus are summarised in the table below.

Table 1 – Amendments to SBR

Section	Update	Syllabus content
C2(e)	Learning outcome added to reflect IFRS that have been in the examinable documents for some time but not explicitly mentioned in the syllabus	a) Borrowing costs
C4	Learning outcomes updated to reflect the issue of IFRS 16	b) Leases
C11	Learning outcomes added to reflect IFRS that have been in the examinable documents for some time but not explicitly mentioned in the syllabus	c) Government grants and assistance d) Biological assets and agricultural produce e) Interim financial reports f) Accounting policies, changes in estimates and the correction of prior period errors