Shravani Samala

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CAS vs. SOA

CAS stands for Casualty Actuarial Society and is that path people take if they want to pursue a career in property and casualty insurance. SOA stands for Societies of Actuaries and is the route people take if they want to work in life, retirement, health, and pensions. Many people choose which path they want to take based on their first job or they already know which side of the field they want to pursue.

The first three exams, Exam Probability, Exam Financial Mathematics, and Investments and Financial Markets, are the same for both tracks. The fourth exam is when the person truly begins on the CAS or SOA track. For the CAS side there is only one track of exams that you have to take. After the first three exams, you must take Modern Actuarial Statistics I and II. These five exams are the preliminary exams. Then, the upper level exams include, Basic Techniques for Ratemaking and Estimating Claim Liabilities, Nation-Specific Examination: Regulation and Financial Reporting, Estimation of Policy Liabilities, Insurance Company Valuation, and Enterprise Risk Management, Advanced Ratemaking, and Financial Risk and Rate of Return. After completing these exams, one becomes part of FCAS, or Fellow of the CAS. For the SOA side, however, there are six tracks one can follow, including C orporate Finance and ERM Track, Quantitative Finance and Investment Track, Individual Life and Annuities Track, Retirement Benefits Track, Group and Health Track, and General Insurance Track. One need not finish all of these tracks to become an FSA, of Fellow of the SOA. Either way, both the CAS and SOA tracks require a person to complete all ten exams to become the an FCAS or FSA. Very few people have achieved both FSA and FCAS, so there is not much out there on which track is harder.

Some examples of companies on the property and casualty industry are State Farm, Geico, Allstate, and Progressive. From what I know these companies have car insurance and sometimes home insurance. Some life and health companies include Highmark, Aetna, Cigna, and Prudential. From the information session, I learned that these companies deal with health insurance, life insurance, retirement plans, and pensions. From an actuarial point of view, CAS is more on the statistical side of things than SOA, which is more focused on taking life contingency courses. Some website say the salary for SOA actuaries are higher, while others say CAS salaries are higher. I don’t mind not knowing this because I a not taking this into consideration when making my decision.

I am more interested in the SOA track because hopefully I will work with a health insurance company such as Highmark, Guardian, or Cigna. I went to information sessions for both health insurance companies and car insurance companies, but the health insurance side interests me more. I also just like the health insurance companies’ culture in general. Many of them are involved in volunteering, sustainability projects, and diversity projects so I feel like I will enjoy being with those companies more than I would. However, there are probably CAS companies that have those values too, so I cannot dismiss them yet!