

The μ mätuary



Students get excited for the start of the 2nd Annual Case Competition

Hello UMAC,

In this edition of the UMACtuary we will reflect on some events we've had so far this semester. We will also hear from Alex Hood, an industry member who has a wide variety of experiences in the actuarial field; Taylor Mitchell, an actuarial student who will share with us her experience in her most recent internship; and Michael Etkin, a recent graduate who will share insight on how to deliver a great interview. We will also look forward to upcoming events and projects UMAC has going on.

Keep watch for upcoming Newsletters to learn more about the actuarial field via internship profiles, industry member interviews and articles.

I hope you enjoy this edition of your UMACtuary.

Gabrielle Lemire, *Communications Chair*

Umac Fish Dinner



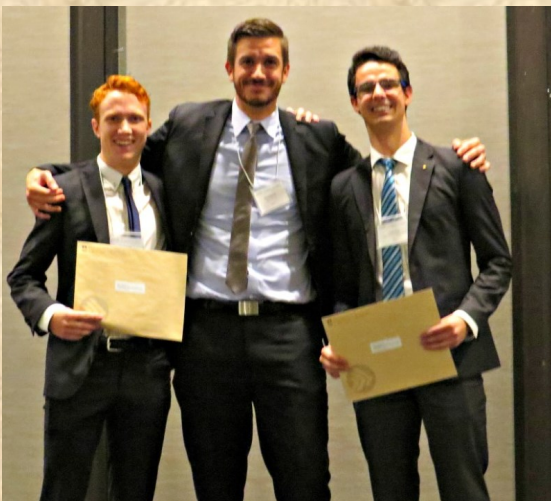
The 55th Annual UMAC Fish Dinner was a smashing success! We are very grateful for the many speakers who shared their wisdom with us. Thank you to Dr. Krystyna Koczanski (Faculty of Science); Dr. Subbu Sivaramaerishnan (Asper School of Business); Dr. Lysa Porth (Warren Center for Actuarial Studies and Research); and our keynote speaker Murray Taylor.

Murray Taylor did an incredible job at delivering a meaningful and thought-provoking speech that was relevant to everyone from the actuarial student just starting out to the experienced actuary. At the 55th Annual Fish Dinner we also managed to celebrate the hard work of many students who won scholarships and awards.



Following the structured portion of the evening students, faculty and employers gathered at a nearby pub to share in drinks and excellent conversation.

We look forward next year's Fish Dinner with anticipation and excitement!



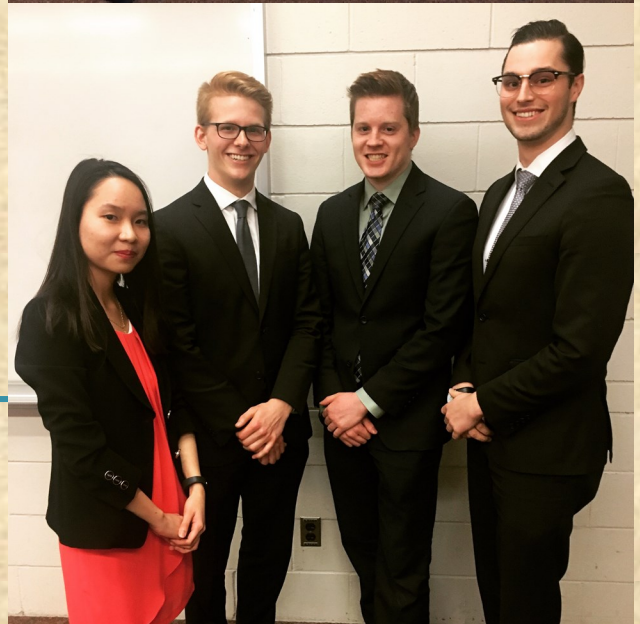
Umac Case Competition

On Saturday November 19th seven teams met together to compete for the annual UMAC Case Competition cash prizes. The seven teams tackled a case that challenged students to recommend an innovative solution to the case's company "Peason Spectre Life's" problem of profitability.

All seven teams did a spectacular job in their 20 minute presentation and Q&A period, especially given the limited 3 hour window in which they had to prepare for the presentation.

After the case competition, UMAC students gathered at the Fall party to celebrate and enjoy each other's company.

Thank you so much to the judges Steve Scoles, Chan Duong, Quinn Pallister and Michael Etkin without whom there would be no case competition. Thank you to our sponsor Investor's Group and co-presidents Devin and Cedric who wrote the case and facilitated the event.



Below: The judges deliberate over which teams will win the UMAC Case Competition.

Right: First, Second and Third place teams (from top to bottom).



Learning about Non-Traditional Actuarial Career Paths

with Alex Hood

Designation: Actuary with IFoA (Institute and Faculty of Actuaries)

Specialization: General Insurance (UK Equivalent of P&C), Reserving and Pricing

Tell us a little about yourself and your introduction in the actuarial field.

I studied Maths at Manchester University in the UK. I chose this because I wasn't really sure what I wanted to be and it seemed a good way to keep my options open! I hadn't heard of the term 'Actuary' until I was applying for internships after my second year of university. Luckily I found my way into an opportunity with Mercer (Pensions Consultancy) and the rest of my career followed on from there. When I began working for Mercer I was fortunate enough to find my way onto a team I found particularly interesting - specializing in life expectancy consulting. I spent my time building models of pension scheme's mortality and helping communicate the results to the Trustees and Sponsor. Working in consulting really helped me to develop softer skills that are traditionally less ubiquitously valued within an insurance company.

Why did you switch from Pensions to Property and Casualty?

I realized I favoured the technical analysis work, and opportunities of that nature were increasingly limited. Within Pensions the Defined Benefit schemes continued to close and be 'bought out'. I assumed (correctly) that analysis work would be more varied within insurance. The other factor was that the headquarters of The Co-operative Group (which is the largest Co-op in the UK) was in Manchester and I was very keen to work for an ethical employer. I had been contacting the Co-op's HR department on a semi-regular basis and when an opportunity to interview came up took the opportunity and moved over to insurance. I was at the Co-op for 3 years spending my time working in risk pricing for both Motor and Home insurance, and have not regretted my decision to move at any time!

Why did you transition to contract work? Can you give an example of contract work.

After 2.5 years at the Co-op I had qualified as an Actuary and decided I wanted to go travelling before returning to work. So I left the Co-op and pursued two of my passions - kitesurfing and acrobatics. I spent a couple of months in the Caribbean learning to instruct kitesurfing before travelling to Colorado for a few months to train some acrobatics. During this time I was able to get part-time evening work marking actuarial assignments for the actuarial education company in the UK. During this time I set up my own company and began to look for appropriate contracts. My first contract was for 6 months with a company in London providing breakdown cover. They had recently had all their pricing members quit for other opportunities so they were looking to find someone with transferable skills to bring in at very short notice. My skills were appropriate for much of the role, but I was chosen for being able to demonstrate my adaptability at interview which was seen as key. It was a great opportunity to be able to experience a different working environment with very different techniques and some new software. I also have contacts that I'll hopefully be able to get future contracting work through (and have been offered a couple of opportunities which for various reasons I couldn't take). Following this I went travelling again for another 6 months - again training acrobatics and marking assignments / exam papers in my spare time in the evenings. I've recently returned to the Co-op for another 6 month role, joining a team where I'll very much be able to benefit from the experience gained in my role with the AA. A great benefit of contracting is the flexibility it gives you to travel, the opportunity to build your experience through regular steep learning curves, and enhanced pay to compensate you for the lack of security! Without a family, and with the flexibility to travel anywhere for work, this isn't an issue for me!



Alex pursuing one of his passions, acrobatics.

Questions from Student Survey

What do you like most about your job? What is a typical day like? What advice would you offer actuarial students?

I've always enjoyed analytical problem solving, and this is something I get to do in abundance. I suppose I really enjoy the e2e process that I get to see as a Senior Analyst / low level manager. So I'll often be tasked with performing the analysis, drawing any conclusions, creating presentations then presenting / discussing with senior management. There is no typical day as such, but it's unlikely I'll ever have a day without using Excel!

Does your organization focus on creating a positive learning / working environment? If so, how do they achieve this? What does your organization look like in 5 years, 10 years, 20 years?

All the working environments I have experienced so far have created a positive learning environment. It's very important that the best techniques are used to try and give us a competitive advantage. Using the same techniques for many years is a sure way to under-perform against other insurers, exposing us to anti-selection and danger to our capital. We share knowledge and techniques internally, send colleagues to external events and employ consultants to ensure we are either using, or are aware of market leading techniques.

What are things your company looks for during an interview?

This will very much depend on the role. As an interviewer I'm always very keen to find a well-rounded individual who possesses strong communication and interpersonal skills to supplement their strong analytical skills. I particularly like to see that a candidate can use common sense, and identify weaknesses in their approaches. I'm a huge fan of the unusual 'reasoning' style questions where you can follow a candidate's thought process through a difficult problem. Examples from past interviews I've attended are 'how many clocks are there in the world' and 'how many gas stations are there in the UK'.

How important is school experience vs. work experience in a resume?

From my perspective I'm usually far more interested in real-world work experience so long as the applicant holds a respectable degree in a numerate discipline. There may be some specific roles that require high level mathematical / IT skills, but in general I want to hear about a candidate's experience in tasks similar to the work they will shortly be performing if they are successful!

Is there a GPA requirement for hiring? How many exams do you look for? What do you think is the most valuable thing when applying for a job? What do most candidates do wrong/overlook? What makes a candidate stand out (during the interview and while on the job)?

In the UK academic requirements vary by employer. Some require a high level university degree, others are happy with a mediocre degree if the candidate can demonstrate experience or other strong skills. We will consider applicants with any number of exams, but I understand this is quite different over the pond! I think it's really important to do your research on the company and on their particular niche of the industry. If you can demonstrate that you know about the role it shows your enthusiasm, your meticulousness and can generate some good will!

In your experience what personality traits allow new employees to be successful in their roles?

Everyone focuses too much on analytical capabilities - statistical understanding, knowledge of programming languages, experience with modelling etc. What is even more important is being able to see past the analysis and results and see the bigger picture. To make inferences and sensible assumptions prior to investing time into any analysis and being able to identify and rationalize the invariable weaknesses in work performed. Finally you need to be able to explain all of this to non-actuarial colleagues. With great technical skills, you can become a great analyst / data scientist. With competent technical skills and great communication skills, interpersonal skills, judgment and understanding you can become a great actuary.



Internship Profile with Taylor Mitchell

Company: Wawanesa Insurance

Industry Sector: Property and Casualty Insurance (P&C)

Department: Corporate Actuarial

Previous Internship, Towers Watson (Connecticut)

My main role was to work as a central coordination team member on the Hartford office's largest billable project to date. The ultimate goal of this project was to calculate and interpret the embedded value.

As a central coordination member, I performed various tasks when needed which involved performing technical reviews (reviewing the work of analysts and consultants ensuring that there are no errors before it is sent to the client), assessing the results, and populating and summarizing the data in the reports that would later be presented to the client's management team. I also built a com-

parison of the leading annuity products in the market and helped launch a demonstration for new Willis Towers Watson software that is now being sold to clients.

Company: Wawanesa, Property and Casualty, (P&C), Insurance.

I was eager and nervous to start work at Wawanesa. I always heard great things about their internship program and was excited to learn more about P&C work, which was a new concept for me at the time. At Wawanesa, the internship program is different for everyone. Each intern is assigned to the department that is the best fit for our abilities, and our projects and responsibilities are developed at the discretion of our team leaders. My peers have been very welcoming and helpful in guiding and mentoring me. I am given both ownership over my work and the opportunity to see how that work affects the organization.

Department: Corporate Actuarial.

This department is responsible for financial projections. Whereas a Finance department may evaluate the current profitability of the company, Corporate Actuarial will evaluate the future profitability of the company. Corporate Actuarial also focuses on predicting the financial future of various branches of the company. Other departments where actuaries are found include: Analytics, ERM, and Pricing. Analytics is research and development focused, ERM identifies systemic risks to the organization, and Pricing includes the more traditional actuarial role of determining how much to charge for premiums.

Taylor's Projects

I have been responsible for two projects this summer. My first project was to analyze the bodily injury reserves at Wawanesa. The objective of this project was to investigate the levels at which our reserves were being set at to ensure sufficiency. These reserves are important, because if deficient reserves are not recognized, it can negatively affect the profitability of the company. My second project was to create a roll forward for September. This involves building a template to estimate future unpaid claims that occur after September.

Technical Skills Required

The main skills needed for my position involve using excel and certain actuarial software including ResQ. This software takes databases of losses and puts them into a triangle. Within the first few weeks I did select readings from the Exam S textbooks to understand basic concepts within P&C Insurance. I came to this company not knowing anything about P&C, but with the support of my co-workers I am now able to apply this knowledge in my work.

Social Aspects of Work

At Wawanesa there is a great work-life balance with an inclusive, tight-knit group of actuaries. I work closely with other actuaries and take breaks with them. Offsite meetings are organized where we present our work to each other, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the different projects going on at the company. Recently at one of these meetings we heard the CFO speak and had a barbeque together afterwards. We also have a weekly lunch and social events such as bowling nights and golf days. We even have a tradition of pulling pranks on our peers who succeed at getting their FCAS designation. And of course we are a part of "passer's night" where Winnipeg's actuarial students come together for a big party!

Questions from Students

1. *How was the experience? Was it related to the courses we take in school? What did you find most challenging on the job?*

My work is definitely related to the Property and Casualty class that will be taught this Winter semester. At the beginning of my internship, I spent time learning these concepts and then applied them throughout the summer. One of the most challenging things to learn is that making mistakes is an integral part of the actuarial job. In fact making mistakes is the best way to learn. It draws attention to areas where you need to grow as an actuary. Mistakes give you the opportunity to seek guidance from other analysts who can teach you. Since we are looking into the future it's important to remember that actuaries are never exactly right, we are just trying to be as close as possible.

2. *How do you stand out from other candidates considering that the most qualified candidate doesn't always get the position?*

I was sure to include my extra-curricular activities on my resume. Some of these things include playing and coaching sports, volunteer work, participating in the MunichRe cup and UMAC. Many interviewers are from the University of Manitoba so they will recognize UMAC.

3. *Your previous internship was in Connecticut. During that internship where did you live? What was the cost of your living arrangements?*

Willis Towers Watson helped me find an apartment. The company provided a housing allowance, which covered 80% of my rent.

4. *How did you stand out once you got an internship?*

Your personality! If you mesh with other co-workers that is a good indication that you are in the right place. Being flexible, adaptable, and appreciative are outstanding qualities. Remember, most actuaries interviewing for these positions already have certain math and technical skills. Employers are wondering: "can I work with this person?"

5. *What kinds of work environment(s) help you to work and learn the best? What skills were necessary for your job and NOT taught at school? Where can students go to learn these skills?*

I can work in most environments but it was really helpful that Wawanesa created such a helpful learning environment. Any skills that were needed for the job were taught on the job through a very supportive process. I am constantly encouraged to explore ideas.

Attending the tutorials that UMAC offers and taking introductory computer science classes are a good way to build useful skills outside of the classroom.

6. *How did your tasks and assignments evolve as you became more comfortable in your position? E.g. What did you start off working on versus the tasks you were completing towards the end of your term.*

In my first project I applied basic concepts to P&C data for most of the duration of the project. In my second project I applied these concepts in the first few days of working on it and then I was able to deduce conclusions on my own and share them.

7. *What was a typical day like during your internship? What surprised you the most? What was the interview process like?*

There isn't really a typical day in my work. I was given approximately one project per month – this project is my primary focus for that time. I also have side tasks helping my co-workers to supplement or support their projects, such as coming up with numbers for a presentation. I was surprised that the tasks weren't as routine as I expected. I am surprised by how much ownership I get over my work. There are projects using my work that get passed off to different departments and they will keep me updated on their results. I also thought that I would need so many skills like coding and computer programming but I was surprised that Wawanesa taught me most of what I needed to know. Interview: All interviewers are very different. In preparing, your focus should be on developing your own sense of who you are.



A Different Approach to Interview Preparation

with Michael Etkin

This article is not designed to get you a job. This article is designed to help you understand why people get jobs. Watch out for a section which will be added to the Actuarial Survival Guide that outlines these concepts in more detail with examples, analysis and recommendations. In this article, I will simply summarize key concepts and hopefully spark your interest.

Getting a job offer is not like passing an actuarial exam! If you approach it the same way, you will underperform your potential. First we need to recognize the differences in what is required to pass exams and deliver a successful interview. Then we can develop a strategy to land us that elusive job offer.

To pass actuarial exams we invest many hours to learn material, we practice questions to test our skills, and we are evaluated using a clear, well defined rubric – this is called an objective task. However, the road to getting a job offer is much different for several reasons; our progress is difficult to measure and we are never exactly clear on how we are evaluated – this is called a subjective task. As such we tend to spend very few hours preparing—this is a mistake. When applying for a job and preparing for the interview, you should focus on the subjective skills necessary to match the application / interview process.

Luckily, our strategy for appealing to the subjective brains of our potential employers can be summarized in 12 words:

People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.¹

Understand the reason some people with a 3.0 GPA and 1 exam win internships – they achieve something more valuable than high grades, they show us purpose, cause, belief, and passion.

Consider the following interview question: “*Why do you think you will succeed in this job?*”

Level 1 answer: “*My GPA is 4.2 and I have 3 actuarial exams*”. Subtext: Hire me because of what I do

Level 2 answer: “*I have great organizational skills and I always prioritize learning*”. Subtext: hire me because of how I do what I do.

Level 3 answer: *“I want to be part of an organization that does ethical work and has a positive impact on their community. This motivates me to master actuarial theory and gain meaningful experience in the workplace.”* Subtext: hire me because of **why** I am doing **what** I do.

The level 3 answer is the most impactful because people understand the rationale behind actions better than they understand facts. When you just talk about **what you do**, people’s emotional responses vary widely. They can feel competitive, envious, dismissive, and indifferent. When you talk about **what you believe**, people have a positive emotional response. You attract people who believe the same thing. They champion your goals. They give you a job.

If you don’t know why you are doing actuarial math, how will you sell yourself?

People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it.

The best way to prepare for interview season is to sit down and figure out why you are here. What do you believe in? How will you use your actuarial skills to make your beliefs a reality? When an employer looks at you, what do you want them to see? As you progress in this introspective journey, four amazing things will start to happen:

- 1) You start telling a story through your interview process. You will find that from beginning to end – that is, from the first time you network with a business professional, to your last full-time interview – you have summarized your actions and achievements into a coherent story for them to follow.
- 2) You will begin to give level 3 answers to interview questions. Interviewing will become easy, engaging, and fun.
- 3) You will realize that we are interviewing them, not the other way around! The best version of yourself will develop in an environment where the organizations beliefs mirror your own. You interview them to determine if their work environment will catalyze your success.
- 4) You will ask better questions to recruiters. Your questions will have more depth, be meaningful, and affirm the story of who you are.

The goal of the job application process is to tell a story. What is your story?

Michael Etkin is currently employed at Wawanesa. He graduated from the Actuarial Sciences program at the University of Manitoba in December 2015 with two internships and has completed 4 of his actuarial exams. He continues to stay involved with UMAC through activities such as judging for the UMAC case competition.

1. Simon Sinek, http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action

Upcoming Events

Mon Nov 28 5-7pm—in Drake Lab. SQL (pronounced Sequel) Workshop

Before the end of the Semester—get in your submissions for the UMAC Library to win an entry for the prize of a one month subscription to ADAPT to the actuarial exam of your choice

January 6-8, 2017- UMAC sends a team of students to ASNA to represent the University of Manitoba actuarial student body. Unfortunately UMAC cannot make any changes to ASNA due to scheduling conflicts resulting from the U of M strike. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.



Watch out for the UMAC Library Roll-Out! Free access to Exam resources and Class Textbooks.



Above: Some of the textbooks and study manuals that will soon be available in the UMAC library.

Left: Have you taken advantage of the print credits available to Asper AND Science actuarial students? Go to the Drake Computer Lab on the main floor of Drake to fill out this sheet and get free print credits and access to Drake computers.

Above: The VBA workshop is a smashing success. Thanks so much to Tanner Klippenstein for leading it!

I NEED TO ACCESS THE DRAKE LAB!!
(fill this out AFTER you have claimed your UMnetID account!)

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

STUDENT #: _____ UMnetID: _____

YOUR BIRTHDATE (for verification) (Month/Day/Year): ____/____/____

☐ Undergraduate ☐ Non-Management ☐ Graduate ☐ My access was working, now it's not
Once filled out, this form becomes a confidential document under FIPPA guidelines.

Working as an Actuary: an Excerpt from the Actuarial Survival Guide

Have you read the Actuarial Survival Guide yet? There are a plethora of resources for everything from exam writing to interviews to what an actuary even is! In this edition of the Newsletter we have featured a few images directly from the ASG with some descriptions of the industry so as to encourage you to access this great resources.

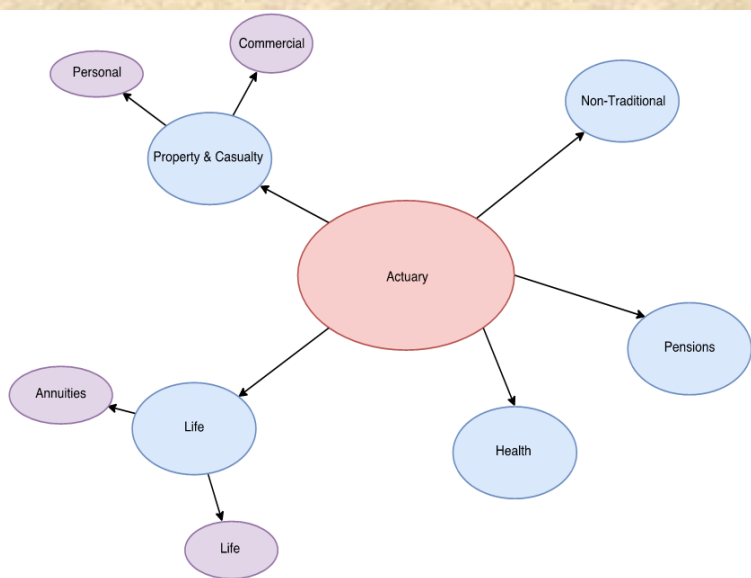
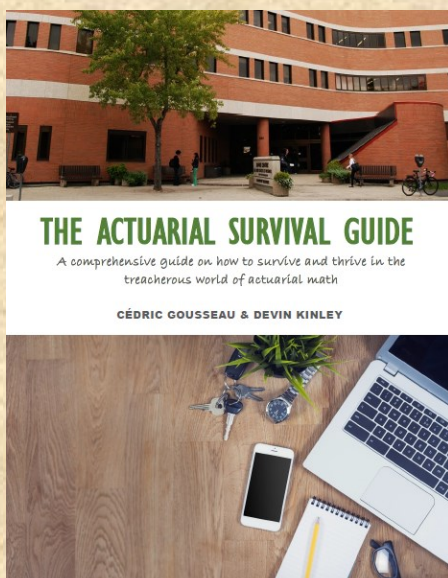
As you can see in the chart below there are many different career paths an actuary can take. Since the designating bodies are separated into Health & Life, and Property & Casualty this is general the first decision that an actuarial student makes in terms of career path direction. Within this division actuaries can work with insurance companies or they can work as consultants. Many consulting positions in Canada are for pensions plans but can also be in other areas. To learn more see the ASG.

What do you want to see added to the Actuarial Survival Guide? Email one of the executives with your ideas and we will do our best to add articles covering topics of interest to students.

Top Left: Cover of the ASG

Top Right: Diagram illustrating the relationship between different areas in the actuarial field.

Below: Table on the amount of actuaries in a given field (US).



Types of Actuaries	Designation	Percentage of Actuaries (US)	Average Salary (US) in 1000's of US\$*
Life	FSA	26.5%	110-170
Health	FSA	25.4%	109-165
Pension	FSA	26%	104-141
(P&C)	FCAS	22.1%	112-194

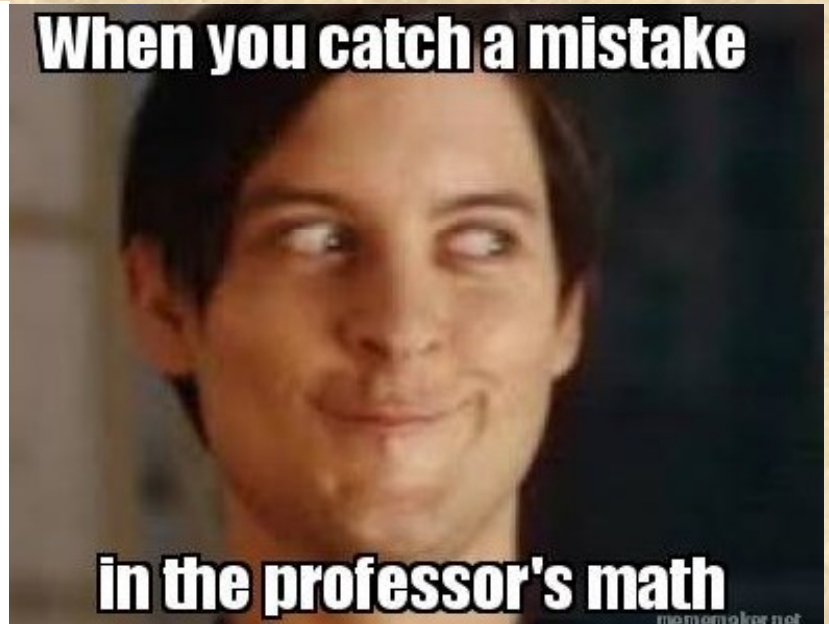
Have a Laugh...

Math got me like



When you catch a mistake

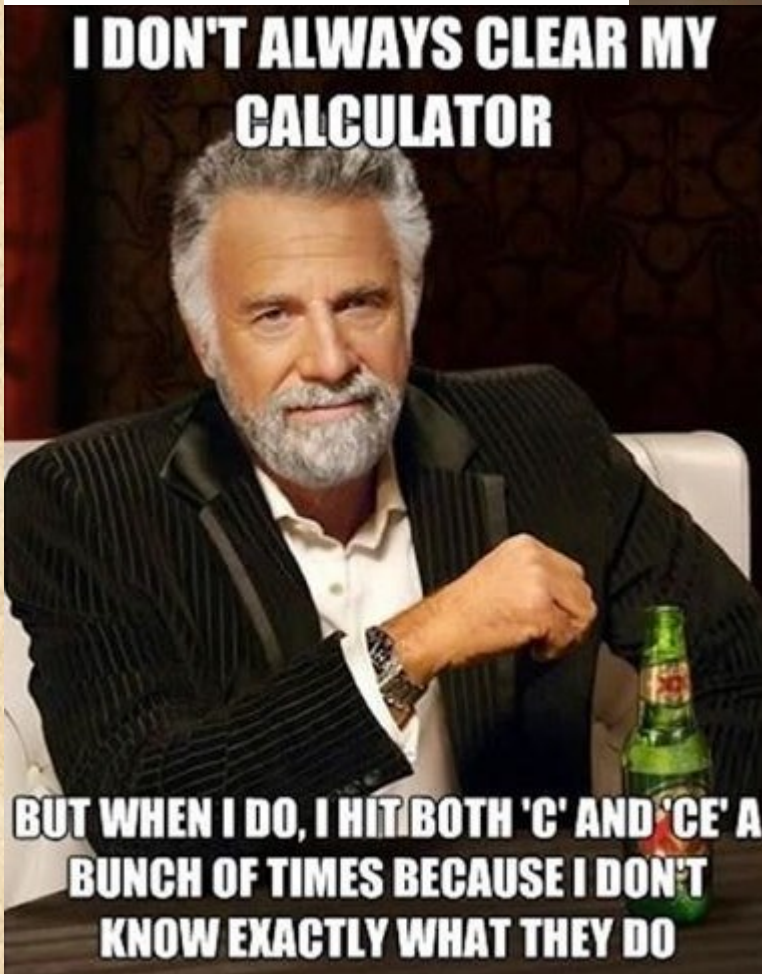
in the professor's math



**I DON'T ALWAYS CLEAR MY
CALCULATOR**

**I SEE YOU'RE DOING YOUR MATH
HOMEWORK IN PEN**

I TOO LIKE TO LIVE DANGEROUSLY



#actuarieshavethemostfun



UMAC

University of Manitoba Actuarial Club