

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Covid pandemic continued to shape our lives during 2022, but increasingly we have been able to return to normality. COVID-19 leaves a legacy though, having accelerated the adoption of digital technologies, introduced hybrid working models and changed the face of education and examinations.

Our shift to virtual has been a huge success and resulted in record levels of member engagement, but some experiences simply cannot be replicated over a computer screen.

I have been privileged to meet in person with members, students and other stakeholders across the UK, Europe and Southeast Asia - hearing their stories, what they value about being part of ICAEW and where we could or should be doing more.

Just as the pandemic subsided, we saw another crisis take hold with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. One of our biggest priorities for the year was supporting our members to navigate the difficult circumstances this presented, interpreting and applying the sanctions against Russia and adapting to wider changes in economic crime legislation.

Throughout my engagements I have sought to promote ICAEW strategy - explaining why we're focussing on the areas we are and ensuring members are aware of the support available and that it is serving their needs.

I feel a particular passion for two of our strategic themes. The first is helping to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals; I know that our profession will be fundamental in making our economies more sustainable, and that many of you strongly agree.

I was delighted to speak on a panel session, at the World Congress of Accountants, about the importance of sustainability education. After all, if we don't understand the risks posed by climate change, how can we advise our clients or employers? Our new Sustainability Certificate, ACA syllabus and climate hub all help to ensure that students and members can get that education.

The second theme is strengthening the profession by attracting talent and building diversity; I am only the fourth female president of ICAEW and have been honoured when young women say to me how much they value seeing a woman in this leadership position. We still have more to do, but you can read about our work and progress on equality, diversity and inclusion in this report, of which I am proud.

I'd like to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers, without whose goodwill ICAEW could not survive. Their contributions help to shape our strategy and activity and ensure we continue to act in the interests of our members and the wider public.

Thank you also to the staff who have supported me in my presidential duties and to everyone at ICAEW whose work has contributed to our successes this year, such as our record student intake and comprehensive member support.

I would also like to thank our Chief Executive, Michael Izza, whose retirement has been recently announced. Michael will be greatly missed by us all and we are very grateful for his dedication to the organisation and his many achievements during his successful career with us. I am sure you will join me in thanking Michael for his contribution to ICAEW over the last 21 years and wish him well for the future.

Serving as ICAEW President is an incredible honour. We are in an outstanding profession and one that will continue to shape, not just our careers as members, but global economies and the future of the planet.



**Julia Penny FCA**, President

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