
2910323 E-commerce

Examiner's report: Zone B

General remarks

Overall, the performance of candidates in this examination was of a good standard, and a few students scored very high marks. These students demonstrated a high level of concentration and application throughout the paper, illustrated that they understood what the question concerned was asking of them, and showed a clear and wide range of reading. However, the papers from many other candidates left much room for improvement. The vast majority of candidates achieved a pass mark, and the range of marks had a normal distribution.

The view of the marking team regarding the examination paper and the associated guidelines is that they were of a high standard. It was also felt that the examination presented an appropriate challenge to students who took this course, and that it was presented correctly.

Reflecting on the lower marks scored by some students, the marking team notes a low standard of written English in many cases. It was difficult to determine the level of understanding of some students; their answers were poorly presented and difficult to comprehend. Students also lost marks by appearing to misunderstand the question. This was especially apparent during the longer answers. The necessity of reading every question very carefully should be stressed to students; planning answers in advance is advised and wider reading needs to be encouraged. The following points are proposed to aid future students taking this examination:

- Use clear and concise language.
- Do not restrict reading to the subject guide only.
- Read as widely as possible from suggested reading lists.
- Examine questions carefully before beginning an answer.
- Answer all required questions, and balance attention across all questions equally.

What follows is a discussion on the aspects of the questions found in this examination. We include potential revising strategies for future candidates.

Question 1

This question was divided into three parts. Part A asked students to compare and contrast the first and second (current) waves of electronic commerce (EC). Part B required a detailed discussion of how EC is being used to increase the efficacy of traditional commerce. Candidates were also required to provide key aspects of Internet use in International EC, and include two advantages and two disadvantages of EC use. Part C also asked students for a detailed description, this time regarding EC's use of markup languages. Answers needed to include identifying currently used languages, and tools needed to develop software applications with them.

Students who demonstrated a wide range of reading materials scored highly when answering this question. Those that had clearly not read beyond the subject guide lost marks. The importance of using a range of appropriate reading materials should be stressed to future students of this course.

Question 2

This question consisted of three parts. Part A was concerned with company branding. First, candidates were asked to consider how companies define their branding strategy by discussing the three aspects of product differentiation, relevance to the user, and perceived value. Additionally, when considering companies promoting themselves as a business brand on the Web, candidates were asked how the techniques of rational branding and affiliate marketing may be used. Continuing the theme from a marketing angle, Part B required students to compare and contrast product- and customer-based marketing strategies when promoting a company's EC web presence, including how such strategies use marketing mix theory. And Part C required candidates to discuss web sites' stickiness by using virtual communities as technologies.

Candidates reduced their mark potential when they appeared not to have read the question correctly and submitted incorrect or incomplete answers. In the future, candidates should be advised on the benefits of taking time to refer continually to the question when writing their answers.

Question 3

Again, this question consisted of three parts. Part A asked students to consider various security approaches in EC when protecting client computers and their customers, including a discussion of cookies, monitoring active content approaches and digital certificates. Part B required candidates to describe encryption use, including a comparison of public and private key encryption, when ensuring channel secrecy for customers. Part C asked for a description of Intellectual Property protection online – including a discussion of property protection software, host name-blocking and proxy servers.

Many students scored highly when answering this question, especially those who weighted their answers according to the potential marks awarded to each part. Future candidates are advised to note how many marks are possible for each part and divide their attention accordingly.

Question 4

This question consisted of four parts. Part A required a discussion of market segmentation processes, including an explanation of usage-based-, behavioural-, and occasion-segmentation. Part B asked candidates to describe the five-stage model of customer loyalty to create strong relationships between company and customers. In Part C, students were asked to describe five examples of differing types of auction bidding processes. Following that, Part D required candidates to contrast business-to-business- with general consumer-auctions (e.g. eBay).

Candidates scored well in this question when they demonstrated they had read appropriate reading beyond just that of the subject guide. Future students are strongly advised not to limit their exam preparation to the subject guide only.

Question 5

This question consisted of three parts. Part A required a description of various current banner advertising – including an explanation of the banner construction process, authoring tools, formats, and intrusiveness levels. In Part B, candidates were asked to contrast product- and customer-based marketing strategies, additionally explaining how both strategies use the marketing mix when establishing an effective web presence. And Part C required a discussion of why a company must consider key technical and non-technical issues when attempting to attract consumers, build trust and loyalty, and establish a successful web presence.

Candidates who achieved high marks in this question wrote clearly and comprehensibly, and demonstrated a wide-range of appropriate real world examples. Future students need note that use of suitable examples will increase their chance of achieving marks.