BCS Higher Education Qualification

Profession Graduate Diploma

September 2019

EXAMINERS' REPORT

Management Information Systems

Question number: A1
Syllabus area: 2.9 IS within functional areas such as Human Resources, Marketing and Sales etc. 3.7 Outsourcing v. insourcing of MIS development and/or operational activities
Total marks allocated: 25
Examiners' Guidance Notes
This was the most popular question and was attempted by four out of five of candidates. In terms of average mark, while most candidates got enough marks to form the basis for an overall pass in the exam as a whole, there were few who were outstanding. **Part a)** A number of candidates failed to offer the THREE arguments required, and did not score well as a result. If they offered fewer arguments then only that proportion of marks was available. Where too many arguments were provided, the answers for those eligible were often too brief and lacked the required depth. **Part b)** The answer was requested in report format suitable for presentation to a Board. As a result, those who failed to do so lost potential marks. Credit was given for the examples, where provided, but a number of candidates failed to do so.

Question number: A2
Syllabus area: 1.1 Management activities, roles and levels 1.2 Management Planning and Control: how planning and control interrelate 1.3 Strategic Planning within an organisation: activities, techniques and results
Total marks allocated: 25
Examiners' Guidance Notes
Just over half the candidates attempted this question. It had the second lowest average mark, and there were very few exemplary answers. **Part a)** As elsewhere in this paper, failure to provide THREE reasons led to a number of candidates scoring poorly. Many of those candidates who attempted this question failed to provide examples to support their reasoning, further limiting the marks available. **Part b)** The report format requested proved a stumbling block for some candidates. Where the format was poorly applied, the quality of the text provided was often also poor and the number of marks awarded tended to be low.

Question number: A3
Syllabus area: 2.1 Management Reporting Systems (MRS) 2.2 Decision Support Systems (DSS) 2.3 Group Decision Support Systems (GDSS) 2.4 Office Information Systems (OIS) including videoconferencing and e-mail
Total marks allocated: 25
Examiners' Guidance Notes
Just under three out of every five candidates selected this question. Although there were quite a few satisfactory answers, this question scored the lowest average mark. **Part a)** - The popularity of this section was not wholly reflected in the quality of the material received, with many definitions being either simplistic or somewhat confused. Candidates should ensure that they are able to define standard terms with clarity and in detail. **Part b) -** Few candidates provided an effective and comprehensive answer to this section. This is regrettable, as the material is a core part of the syllabus. Once again, a degree of clarity is required in how the answer is presented.

Question number: B4
Syllabus area: 1.5 The nature of information: classifications and characteristics…. 2.0 MIS applications and relationships. The definition, role and capabilities of various MIS applications that may be found within organisations
Total marks allocated: 25
Examiners' Guidance Notes
This was a popular question with approximately 80% of candidates attempting it. The overall pass rate was 60% and the average mark was around 10 out of 25. Part a) Many candidates received good marks for their answers, as they clearly articulated the reasons why information has to be timely, relevant and accurate. However, some candidates missed explaining one or more of the characteristics. Instead, there were several instances where a candidate would answer that 'accurate information means information that is accurate' or 'relevant information means it is relevant' – these statements say nothing new and therefore gain no marks. Timely was occasionally related to the information being up to date, which is more to do with relevance than the timeliness of information (i.e., available neither too early nor too late). Part b) This was less well done by many candidates: indeed, some choose to not attempt an answer to this part and this meant that their overall mark could only reach a maximum of 7 (based on full marks for part a)). Omitting to answer large parts of a question is poor examination practice and strongly discouraged. When attempted, candidates' answers to Part b) were of varied quality. Several candidates did not understand the MIS emphasis of the question, instead providing descriptions of business/management concepts or IS/IT concepts relating to operational support. The three concepts candidates chose to describe were sometimes very closely related (e.g., by selecting the Internet, mobile phones and tablets), and therefore the same arguments were repeated for their support of timely, relevant and accurate information provision. Concept descriptions were often thin. Even where the descriptions were of sound depth, the reasons why the concepts enable timely, relevant and accurate information provision were weak and simplistic: very few candidates considered the

correctness of processing and of the underlying data sources to be key to the provision of accurate information, for instance.

Question number: B5

Syllabus area:

2.6 Application of On-Line Analytical Processing (OLAP)/ Data mining/ Business intelligence (BI) tools in supporting management decision-making.

3.3 Techniques and methodologies for supporting MIS development….

Total marks allocated: 25

Examiners' Guidance Notes

This question was attempted by a third of candidates. The overall pass rate was over 60% and the average mark was around 12 out of 25 which was the best performance in the examination.

Part a)

Answers here were of variable quality, although most gained good marks. There were many candidates that clearly knew about the multi-dimensional database operations, but there were also some that did not know much at all about this subject and therefore only managing to scrape together one or two marks. Drill down and roll up were the most-understood operations, with many candidates providing sound MIS-related examples and gaining full marks for their answers. Slice-and-dice was the least understood of the four, with several candidates mistaking it for a pivot operation.

Part b)

Answers to this part were also varied in quality. Although there was a generally competent level of understanding evident of star schemas and their implementation within data warehouses/marts, the role of the fact table within this configuration was not always clear/correct. Snowflake schema descriptions did not always convey the requirement for explicit dimension table structures across levels of view. Overall, answers tended to emphasise implementation rather than design. The arguments put forward for star and snowflake schema design use in (and which might be better than the other for) multi-dimensional data mart design were generally weak or non-existent.