BCS Higher Education Qualification

Diploma

September 2019

EXAMINERS' REPORT

Professional Issues in Information Systems Practice

General comments
The paper is a core paper for those on the Diploma. It attracts a larger number of candidates in each sitting. There were some very good answers to the questions, but a number of candidates did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge across the range of topics. There is a repeat of the same reasons for candidates who fail this module or obtain low marks. The main reasons are: •   Not addressing the actual question. •   Only addressing parts of the question; •   Not providing appropriate detail/content in the answers. Some candidates provide general answers to some topics instead of addressing the question. An example in this paper is for A1, where some candidates would talk about the Royal Charter rather than the actual topic of an objective to Advance the Knowledge of Computing. Whilst some relevant points may be made in such answers, candidates should try to answer the specific question that is on the paper. A number of candidates did not attempt the relevant number of questions for the paper and some candidates provided an answer for each question. It would be better for candidates to select four questions and focus their answers on those questions. Candidates who attempted fewer questions may well have passed had they answered the required number of questions.

Question number: A1
Syllabus area: Professional Institutions (1.2, 1.2)
Total marks allocated: 25
Examiners' Guidance Notes
This question was in two parts. The first part was about professionalism and the second part was about the BCS's objective to Advance Knowledge of Computing. Answers for the first part sometimes talked more about what a profession is, rather than the way that a person working in the profession might work. For example, instead of talking about a profession setting standards, the answer could have discussed how IT professionals should carry out their duties following good practice, with professional competence and with appropriate commitment to the stakeholders. For the second part, some candidates identified appropriate issues such as Setting HEQ examinations, supporting Special Interest Groups and advising government on matters about computing; other relevant answers were given credit. Some answers talked generally rather than giving specific examples – for example, talked about publications, but did not identify ones such as IT Now. A number of candidates wrote about the Royal Charter for the second part of the question, which did not address the question directly.

Question number: A2
Syllabus area: Organisations and their Structure (2.1)
Total marks allocated: 25
Examiners' Guidance Notes
The first part of the question was about the main aspects of a Limited Liability company. The second part of the question was about arguments in favour of outsourcing IT provision. Answers for the first part did identify issues including the limited liability of the shareholders, ownership divided into shares and the company being a legal entity. More detail to explain those ideas would have enhanced answers from a number of candidates. Some answers mis-understood the idea of the company being a distinct legal entity, instead suggesting that one person becomes the legal entity. Answers for the second part were better overall, although some were brief lists of issues. Answers talked about specific types of outsourcing (e.g. using cloud-based facilities) but did not link that idea clearly to the business benefits. For example, a company could focus on its core business and make cost savings. Some answers only identified two benefits rather than three.

Question number: A3
Syllabus area: Human Resources Management (9.2, 9.3)
Total marks allocated: 25
Examiners' Guidance Notes
There were three parts to the question. The first two parts covered SFIAplus and the final part covered techniques that can be used to select candidates that have been shortlisted for a job vacancy.   Knowledge of the SFIAplus framework for the first part was reasonable, talking about skills and competencies and the use of a matrix of skills. However, answers for the second part revealed that many candidates were unaware of the different categories within the framework, such as 'Strategy and Architecture', 'Change and Transformation' and 'Skills and Quality'.   Answers for the third part were better overall. Candidates demonstrated knowledge of possible options such as Task Assessment, Panel Interviews and a series of One-to-one Interviews. Most answers provided a suitable description of these options, but more could have been said to demonstrate the candidates understanding of the topic. Other options were considered and were awarded marks where appropriate.

Question number: B4
Syllabus area: Management Accounting (4.1) and Finance (3.1)
Total marks allocated: 25
Examiners' Guidance Notes
This question covered some definitions of management accounting terms and the production of a balance sheet given some information about a company.   There was better knowledge about Direct and Indirect costs, but candidates were less certain of the terms Owner's Equity and Accrual Basis.   There was a mixed response to the production of the balance sheet. Mapping the given information into Assets was generally OK, thinking about assets such as Land and Building and different types of Current Assets. Candidates also identified liabilities from the list of information, although didn't always label them as liabilities in the balance sheet. Better answers identified that shareholder equity should be shown as part of the liabilities section of the balance sheet.

Question number: B5
Syllabus area: Intellectual Property (6.1) and Legal Obligations (5.1)
Total marks allocated: 25
Examiners' Guidance Notes
This question was in two parts. The first part addressed the issues of Copyright, Patents and Trademarks. Candidates generally answered this part well, showing understanding of the protection offered by copyright and trademarks. Some candidates could define what copyright was, but they could not identify what protections it might provide. Further, some candidates talked about patents, even though they would not be relevant to the given scenario. The second part of the question was concerned with the equality act and the given scenario. This raises issues of how the application might be adapted to improve accessibility. A number of candidates correctly identified items in the scenario, such as the text and images, as ones that could be adjusted to improve accessibility to the application. Any relevant answers were given credit. Some answers could be enhanced with more detail about how the changes might improve accessibility.

Question number: B6
Syllabus area: Legal Obligations (5.1) and The Internet (7.1)
Total marks allocated: 25
Examiners' Guidance Notes
The question was in two parts. The first part covered data protection legislation and the second part covered consumer legislation relevant for selling via an e-commerce site. Candidates generally understood issues about data protection and mentioned ideas such as accuracy of data, managing requests for data and the length of time that data may be kept. The general issue is one of handling and processing the data in a responsible manner. More detailed answers expanded the discussion, e.g. thinking about handling the general information that would be provided by customers when buying from an e-commerce site. There were mixed responses from candidates to the second part, showing less detailed knowledge of consumer legislation such as the distance selling regulations. Typically, a few relevant issues were stated, e.g. correct information about goods and a valid returns policy, but these could have been improved with additional discussion. Some answers mentioned issues to do with cookies, which wasn't the intended focus for the question.