
Examiners' commentaries

2016–17

CO3318 Information systems management – Zone B

General remarks

Overall the performance on this examination paper was satisfactory. The paper consisted of five questions and candidates were required to answer any three out of these five.

Candidates are reminded that they should only answer three questions. Only the first three questions are marked. Candidates are also reminded to ensure that their handwriting is legible.

It is important that candidates take care to present their work in a well-organised manner. It is helpful to start a new question or sub-section on a new page, add headings and underline key points as appropriate.

Please read questions carefully and focus on what is required for a complete answer. The number of marks is a good indicator of the level of detail and time required. If a question requires use of definitions and examples, please remember to include these to maximise the marks you can achieve.

Comments on specific questions

Comments on each specific question are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Question 1a

This question required knowledge of the value chain and its importance in information systems management. Good answers to this question provided a diagram based on Porter's illustration of the value chain. Most candidates discussed in some detail the critical activities of the value chain. For example, some candidates identified the importance of organisational activities such as undertaking sales and then went on to discuss how moving to e-business would remove the need for customers to come to the site to obtain their goods. Alternatively, some candidates discussed the role of IT systems in reducing the costs of inbound logistics, or better liaison with manufacturers to give more information on where cars are in the pipeline, allowing customers to get the car of their choice sooner.

Question 1b

There were some very good answers to this question. Particularly good answers suggested that an audit demonstrates that systems can perform to the prescribed specification and required procedures. An information system is auditable if it allows an auditor to determine that correct processing takes place on an ongoing basis and that errors and exceptions are handled correctly. Candidates then went on to discuss some of the principles of auditing, such as the need to design systems with audits in mind; for example by making costs explicit and undertaking audits on a continuous basis.

Question 2a

Most candidates correctly identified that extent of user acceptance of a new

system is primarily dependent on two factors – how easy the system is to use and how useful it is in helping the end user achieve their task.

Question 2b

Candidates correctly identified the changes from the current organisation and the problems and procedures that might result from this change. Procedures might include:

- plan the sequence of changes that will minimise these problems
- take steps to investigate any constraints from company policy or unions
- gain commitment from line management
- identify and design new procedures
- plan total sequence of change implementation
- allocate physical requirements
- initiate, monitor and evaluate project.

Question 2c

Good answers provided a definition of a supply chain and then discussed some of the following types of supply chains: internal, upstream, downstream and overall supply chains. Credit was given where candidates provided examples of each of these different types.

Question 3a

This question was answered well. Candidates identified several different reasons why the evaluation of IT systems is difficult. Some of these included:

- systems do not have adequate initial descriptions of objectives and criteria for measuring whether they are a success or failure
- evaluation must take into account qualitative aspects which are difficult to quantify
- evaluation is intrinsically subjective
- even if initial system objectives could be met they would differ considerably from the final objectives due to evolving user requirements
- budgeting practice conceals full costs (up to 40 per cent of relevant costs can be outside traditional IT budgets).

Question 3b

Most candidates provided a wide range of methods for assessing IS spend. Credit was awarded where candidates sorted these into categories; such as those methods associated with assessment at the pre-implementation phase – for example, capital budgeting method, scoring models – and those methods associated with assessment at the post-implementation phase, etc.

Question 4a

Good answers started out by providing a definition of what is meant by a Service Level Agreement and then went on to discuss the value it adds; such as formalising the relationships between the parties, providing a focal point for discussions, etc.

Question 4b

This question was straightforward and candidates answered it well. Candidates identified a wide range of costs. Some excellent answers put these costs into categories; for example, grouping them in terms of those incurred in the short term, the medium term and the long term.

Question 5a

Good answers to this question identified the key components to be considered when developing an information systems strategy, including:

- a statement of the business strategy
- a statement of current systems
- proposed new developments
- management strategies
- implementation strategies for the IS plan
- resource requirements.

Question 5b

Good answers discussed many advantages of end user computing, such as:

- reduces development backlog
- reduces time lag
- suits task culture
- encourages innovation
- users will be responsible for their own work
- users know their own requirements best
- managers should have freedom to purchase what they want.