
Examiners' commentary

2017–2018

CO3318 Information systems management – Zone B

General remarks

Overall the performance on this examination was satisfactory. Candidates are once again asked however to pay attention to the presentation of their work. Please remember to write legibly and to structure your answers in a way which shows the logic of your thinking. Make use of underlining and clear paragraphs. Please start each question on a new page.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- a. Good answers to this question provided a clear introductory statement on what is meant by the Bullwhip effect in the context of supply chain management. Thereafter candidates could choose to discuss one of a number of issues that might contribute to the occurrence of this effect, such as lack of communication between the various parties, or price variations. In some instances, candidates gave an example to support their answer. Where they did so they scored additional marks.
- b. This was a straightforward question. The major steps that need to be taken in undertaking a business process re-engineering initiative are set out in the subject guide. Candidates scored sufficiently well to pass on this question where they repeated the steps from the subject guide. Additional marks were earned where candidates provided a clear example of how these steps could be applied in a real-world scenario.

Question 2

- a. This question allowed for candidates to select from a range of planning methods. Many discussed top-down planning whilst others described the bottom-up planning methodology. Good answers to this question suggested that both types of planning methods were required. Where candidates provided good justification for their choice of methods they were rewarded with higher marks.
- b. In some instances, answers to this question lacked focus. Whilst a wide range of difficulties might be encountered in conducting a planning exercise, many candidates chose to talk about difficulties encountered in the implementation phase of the plan, rather than the planning stage itself. The question specifically asked for the difficulties in the planning stage to be addressed and not those that may be encountered in the implementation stage. This highlights the importance of reading the question carefully.

Question 3

- a. Good answers to this question explained that the Balanced Scorecard is an example of a performance management system. They then went on to discuss that it is not only a measure of performance but also a methodology for translating an organisation's financial, customer, internal

processes and learning and growth objectives into a set of actionable initiatives. Some excellent answers also discussed the steps by which the objectives are achieved.

- b. This question was well answered, with most candidates able to identify the objectives of a defence strategy correctly.

Question 4

- a. Many candidates failed to recognise that this question was referring to the productivity paradox. Those who recognised it as such and went on to explain the productivity paradox scored well on this question. Specifically, they identified the potential causes of this paradox such as the difficulties experienced in measuring the benefits of an IT investment, etc.
- b. This question was generally not answered well. Most candidates correctly identified the difference between internal and external control and were able to provide examples of these two types of control. However, they fell short on being able to discuss the activities for each case. Good answers discussed external activities such as tax regulations etc. and internal control activities such as performing an audit trail.

Question 5

- a. This was a straightforward question, and where candidates chose to answer it, they did so well. There are a wide range of risks associated with end user development and most of these are acceptable. Some candidates also discussed the benefits of end user development. This was not asked for in the question and again demonstrates the importance of reading the question carefully and focusing on what is being asked for.
- b. Answers to this question were interesting. Having identified a wide range of risks and limitations in their answers to question 5a, many candidates provided good suggestions as to how these risks and limitations might be managed effectively.