
Examiners' commentary

2018–2019

CO1108 Information systems: foundations of e-business – Zone B

General remarks

Overall, the performance on this examination was satisfactory. However, candidates are reminded to pay attention to the presentation of their work. Please remember to write legibly and to structure answers in a way that shows the logic of your thinking. Make use of underlining and clear paragraph breaks. Make appropriate use of headings. Please start each question or sub-part of a question on a new page.

This paper required candidates to answer four out of six questions. Only the first four answers undertaken were marked.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- a. Most candidates suggested that Lawsons Computers should adopt three of the competitive strategies described by Michael Porter such as service differentiation, etc. In general, these descriptions were well done. Where candidates lost marks was where they failed to recommend which of these strategies would be most appropriate for Lawsons and why.
- b. In answering this question, it was appropriate for students to restate the three competitive strategies for Lawsons Computers that they had identified in their answer to Question 1 a and then suggest how information services could assist them in achieving this competitive strategy. For example, some students having chosen a product differentiation competitive strategy could then suggest how smart products and mobile apps would enable them to achieve this strategy.

Question 2

- a. The first part of this question was well answered. Candidates identified and appropriately described three types of business data that Brogans could use to generate business intelligence such as operational or customer data. A wide variety of different types of business data were identified and this was acceptable. The second part of the question required candidates to explain where and how this data could be stored and accessed. Many candidates failed to provide this information in their answers.
- b. Candidates found this question challenging. Many did not give a clear description of what data mining involves and why it is important. Good answers explained that data mining finds data through association, sequences, classification, clusters, etc. and then suggested ways in which this would be helpful to Brogans. It was important in answering this question that candidates read the description of Brogans in the case study and applied their answers to this accordingly.
- c. Good answers provided a clear definition and explanation of big data. They also pointed out that Brogans should use it because it highlights patterns and anomalies in the dataset. These patterns and anomalies potentially provide greater insights into various aspects of the business such as customer behaviour, etc.

Question 3

- a. Unfortunately, many candidates misinterpreted what is meant by the term *business ecosystem*. Where candidates realised that this term refers to a collection of loosely coupled but interdependent industries they scored well on this question. In particular, having understood the meaning of the term they were then able to provide an appropriate real-world example.
- b. An appropriate way to approach this question was to provide definitions of what is meant by *first mover* and *disruptive technologies*. This would satisfy examiners that the candidate understands the concepts. Thereafter candidates were able to discuss why being a first mover is not always beneficial. There are numerous reasons why this is the case, for example, a first mover may not have sufficient resources to exploit the technology. Excellent answers included appropriate examples of organisations who had failed to reap the benefits of being first movers in a particular industry.
- c. In answering this question many candidates misinterpreted what is meant by the term *virtualisation*. Candidates are reminded of the importance of being able to define any terms or concepts that they come across in their studies. Where candidates understood the concept of virtualisation they could then go on to discuss how firms can pool and arrange multiple storage infrastructure resources to meet specific needs and lower costs.

Question 4

- a. The question of moral dimensions is covered well in the recommended reading and hence candidates who had studied this did well on this question. Some of the appropriate moral dimensions that were correctly discussed included information and property rights and obligations as well as accountability, and system life qualities.
- b. There were a variety of interesting answers to the technology trends that pose significant ethical issues for companies. Among the issues highlighted were those that considered the impact of increasing computer power and data storage costs on quality of life and privacy.

Question 5

- a. This was a straightforward question with answers correctly describing capabilities such as data definition, a data dictionary and a data manipulation language.
- b. There was no single correct answer to this question. A wide variety of answers were acceptable. Most candidates performed well on this question. Good answers provided a variety of examples such as the importance of data accuracy, and discussed important issues such as those surrounding how end users will utilise the data.

Question 6

- a. A very straightforward question that was well answered with candidates accurately describing the application, transport, internet and network interface layers of the TCP/IP model. It was appropriate in answering this question for candidates to explain the acronym TCP/IP in full.
- b. A shortcoming of answers to this question was that candidates did not provide sufficient detail to their answers. The question was worth 10 marks and hence required a detailed description of how packet switching works. Candidates are reminded that it is important that they consider the number of marks awarded for a particular question and provide the level of detail accordingly.