Examiners' commentaries 2016–17

CO3318 Information systems management – Zone A

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

Good answers to this question selected three competitive thrusts particularly pertinent to the **Ballyhoo** organisation. Many candidates appropriately discussed issues such as lower costs, product or service differentiation and niche marketing. Some excellent answers considered service differentiation rather than product differentiation. The major weakness observed in answers to this question was missing or had limited discussion of how information systems might assist **Ballyhoo** in achieving these competitive thrusts. Where candidates failed to discuss the role of Information Systems in supporting these thrusts, minimal marks were awarded.

Question 1b

This question required candidates to discuss the way in which traditional IT departments have changed in recent years, including how they have moved from supporting businesses to be potential sources of competitive advantage and how they have been headed up by an IT professional in the past but are now managed by hybrid managers who have both technical and business skills. Candidates were generally able to provide discussion; however, very few then went on to cover the final part of the question and explain how this might impact on their view of the IT department in the future.

Question 2a

Good answers to this question mentioned the major steps to be undertaken in a business process re-engineering initiative. Candidates who answered this question well included the following points:

- identify the business vision and process improvement objectives
- select the processes for improvement
- understand and measure existing processes
- re-design the processes
- manage the implications of the process redesign.

Question 2b

Candidates generally answered this question well. Some candidates lost marks because they either failed to include the Venkatraman diagram or had not given details of the elements in the diagram. Many candidates were able to identify the categories of levels of transformation but were not able to describe them in any detail. Answers that simply mentioned 'internal integration' as a level of transformation were not sufficient. It was also necessary for candidates to further discuss what 'internal integration' means.

Question 3a

This was a straightforward question. Most candidates correctly identified the importance of audits to ensure that systems perform to their specification and that procedures are conformed with.

Question 3b

Good answers explained that audits should be continuously undertaken. Even at the systems development stage, audits should be kept in mind. Candidates then went on to discuss that they should make costs explicit and that they should cover both manual and automated processes as well as products, processes and procedures. Good answers also included a discussion on exception and contingency planning.

Question 3c

This part of the question was answered well, with candidates identifying the importance of including risk identification, risk analysis, risk handling and disaster recovery in an information systems risk strategy.

Question 4a

There were various answers given to this question. What was important was not whether the candidate agreed with the statement or not, but the soundness with which they justified their position. Many candidates opted to agree with the statement. Some good answers considered the technological imperative, social choice or socio-technical models.

Question 4b

Many candidates appropriately suggested the following ways to measure the success of a project. Good answers discussed the fact that it might be necessary to consider more than one of these factors:

- high levels of system use
- user satisfaction with the system
- achieved objectives
- financial payoff.

Question 4c

This question was only worth **two** marks and simply required a clear definition of what is meant by a Service Level Agreement.

Question 4d

Candidates discussed a variety of ways to add value, including:

- providing a conceptual focus
- formalising relationships
- providing focal point for discussions
- improving understanding of user concerns
- ensuring objective measure and record of services
- putting individual IS failures into context of overall record
- directing IS resources into activities which give most
- benefit to the user.

Question 5a

Answers to this question were disappointing. It was worth **12** marks and therefore required a sound definition of computer forensics and an appropriate example. At least one example was required and many candidates found it difficult to provide an appropriate example.

Question 5b

The answer to this question was dependent on the candidate's personal view. Where they had provided a suitable example in part a), they were able to use it to support their answer to part b). Question 5 was split between 5a. and 5b. – with each worth around 50 per cent of the marks – and it was therefore important to devote enough time and detail to each part.