Examiners' commentary 2018–2019

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

General remarks

Overall, the performance on this examination was satisfactory. However, candidates are once again asked 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 students to answer four out of six questions. Only the first four answers undertaken were marked.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

a. Good answers to this question provided a definition of customer intimacy and then went on to describe the benefits of this intimacy for the organisation. There was no single correct answer to this question. There were a variety of suggestions as to how Goldstar could achieve greater customer intimacy that were appropriate. It was important for candidates to discuss the role of information technology in assisting Goldstar to achieve greater intimacy. For example, Goldstar might create a website where customers may communicate with the organisation. A wide range of other examples were offered and were rewarded appropriately.

b. This was a broad question and allowed for a wide variety of answers. Examples of ways in which Goldstar could use its web presence to generate meaningful management information might include capturing customers' browsing histories. These histories could then be used to analyse whether customers are satisfied with the links between pages or not. Paying close attention to these details would allow Goldstar to understand and reach their customers better, while also making the customers' online experience more enjoyable.

c. An appropriate way to answer this question was to define at the outset what is meant by operational excellence. Having done so, candidates could then give examples of how information systems could help Goldstar achieve higher levels of productivity, efficiency and profitability.

Question 2

a. Many candidates correctly identified four collaboration tools that are available to help the Stacys branches to work together. However, candidates tended to answer less well on the part of the question that asked them to recommend the most useful collaboration tool for Stacys and state why. Where candidates chose an obvious tool such as email they tended to do well, as they could easily expand on their reasoning as to why they thought that this was the most useful collaboration tool. However, a wide range of communication tools were selected by candidates in answer to this part of the question, and were acceptable.

b. This part of the question was, in general, poorly answered. Where candidates knew the five steps to take when using a time/space matrix they scored well, but when they didn't know these, answers were very poor.

Question 3

a. There is not just one definition of a business process. A variety of definitions were acceptable provided they made sense and were clearly stated. There were a myriad of different processes that could be selected and discussed that are associated with the creation of a mobile phone, such as manufacturing and testing. Equally, there are many choices of different processes that could be selected for running a hospital such as hiring staff, discharging patients, etc.

b. Good answers to this question pointed out that the term *information systems* is broader than the term *information technology* which refers primarily to the hardware and software elements of the system. The second part of this question was concerned with the strategic business objectives. These are clearly stated in the subject guide for this course.

c. Many candidates were not able to define the term *value chain*. Good answers included the idea that a value chain adds value to products, data or processes at various stages, transforming them into greater value. An answer on the applicability of this to a cinema could discuss the stages in the process of ticket sales to customers and how analysing these stages could identify where changes could be made to the process to increase the value-add.

Question 4

This was a popular question and was well answered. There were no sub-parts to this question. Candidates referred to the main categories of systems such as transaction processing systems, management information systems, executive information systems, etc. and for each of these described the level of management they support, e.g. operational level workers, middle management, or senior executives. Some candidates illustrated their answer by providing a diagram which was appropriate.

Question 5

a. This was a challenging question and not many candidates chose to answer it. Appropriate answers chose a specific database such as a business intelligence database. This type of database could be used to predict future trends that help the business to anticipate future demand and align their business processes accordingly. This results in lowering costs. However, a wide range of databases could be chosen as the example, and would have been appropriate.

b. One way to approach this question was to provide an explanation of what is meant by product differentiation. Database technologies could be used to provide information on customers and identify additional services that might be offered to customers that are not provided by the competitors – so for example, advice on how to care for their new furniture. This might serve to differentiate their product.

c. Candidates suggested a variety of ways in which a business' data can become redundant or inconsistent. Many candidates discussed the lack of maintenance of the system as a cause, using different names for the same entity or incorrect data entry. Some candidates correctly discussed the importance of data quality audit and data cleansing.

d. A shortcoming in answering this question was that candidates did not list five factors as requested. This highlights the need for candidates to read the question carefully and ensure that they provide the information that is asked for. Many candidates identified factors such as the influence

of the data quality, business processes and user needs, but fell short of identifying five factors as requested.

Question 6

a. This was a popular question with candidates giving a good definition and explanation of NORA as Non Obvious Relationship Awareness technology. Most candidates discussed the privacy issues surrounding whether it is ethical to use such technology either in the government or the private sector. Excellent answers discussed whether the ethical issues raised by NORA were the same for these two sectors.

b. This part of the question was poorly answered. Many candidates did not clearly define the concepts of responsibility, accountability and liability. They were particularly confused by the meaning of the term liability. Good answers to this question not only defined these terms but also gave examples of these terms to support their answers.