
Examiners' commentary

2018–2019

CO3318 Information systems management – Zone A

General remarks

Overall, the standard of performance on this examination in 2018–19 was good. Candidates tended to read the questions carefully and to adapt their answers to what was being asked. The paper contained five questions from which candidates were required to choose three. Only the first three questions answered in the examination booklet were marked.

There remains room for improvement in the way that candidates present their work. Please be reminded that you should start each question or sub-question on a new page. In particular, candidates should pay attention to their handwriting and ensure that their scripts are legible.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- a. There were a number of ways in which candidates approached this question. There was no one, single approach that was correct. Many candidates followed the approach taken in the course subject guide and considered the need to upgrade IT systems as a result of various pressures, including market, technological and social pressures. This was an appropriate way of categorising the various drivers that require an organisation to update its information systems. Excellent answers then went on to give details and examples of each of these drivers and their impact on the organisation and its IT systems.
- b. It was important to read this question carefully, as there were two parts to it. One part required a discussion on how to establish a financial case for upgrading the information systems and the second part required a discussion on alternative methods for justification of the investment case. Good answers to this question started by pointing out difficulties of evaluating the financial case as a result of a number of issues. These included the difficulties associated with quantifying the intangible benefits that might accrue from the introduction of the system, or the length of time that it might take for benefits to accrue. The second part of the question was less well addressed. Many candidates provided insufficient detail on alternative methods of assessment such as the Balanced Scorecard.

Question 2

- a. Once again candidates approached this question in a variety of acceptable ways. It was interesting to note the different approaches. Some candidates provided their answer in the format of an agenda, which the question explicitly required. As for the items for discussion, many candidates suggested following the steps covered in a top down planning approach as well as considering bottom up planning factors in determining the way forward. This was a very good way to go about addressing the question.
- b. This part was well answered with candidates providing full lists of both the direct and indirect costs that might be incurred by Bell in developing this system. Some candidates referred to the Total Cost of Ownership of

a system. This was a highly appropriate approach to take in this instance. Good answers also reflected that the type of system being developed was an accounting system, and that there were therefore some specific costs associated with developing this type of system. It was also appropriate to consider the costs that might be incurred as a result of the fact that Bell had no experience in system development.

Question 3

- a. When answering this part, candidates had a tendency not to focus sufficiently on the question being asked. Good answers discussed the fact that although there may not be laws and regulations to cover these issues, there are a number of ethical principles that are appropriate to consider in making these decisions. Excellent answers then went on to describe some of these ethical principles such as Kant's Categorical Imperative and the 'no free lunch' rule. Other good answers gave appropriate examples to support their assertions. In order to score high marks on this question, it was necessary for candidates to address the extent to which they agreed with the statement.
- b. This was a straightforward question and most answers scored high marks. The steps that are suggested to be taken by a manager in resolving an ethical dilemma are clearly set out in the CO3318 subject guide. Where candidates had studied these materials, and provided and discussed these steps, they performed well on this question.

Question 4

- a. This question was again straightforward and referred directly to issues covered in the subject guide, which suggests nine steps that are appropriate to be taken in the order fulfilment process. Excellent answers not only identified each of these nine steps but also pointed out the importance of control at all the stages of undertaking these steps.
- b. This question required candidates to use lateral thinking. Good answers set out from the beginning the importance of having a returns policy in the modern retail world. Candidates needed to use some of their own thinking and ideas as to why this is important for an organisation. It was important when suggesting different options for a returns policy that candidates identify four options as requested in the examination paper and not just two or three. Candidates are reminded of the importance of reading the question asked and providing an answer, which is closely tailored to what the question requires.

Question 5

- a. A wide variety of suggestions was made as to the objectives for small organisations in determining their Information Systems defence strategies. Examples of these objectives included prevention and deterrence, detection, limitation of damage, recovery, correction, awareness and compliance. A shortcoming in answering this question was that most candidates failed to address the issue of this being a small organisation and did not express their views as to whether this was different to the case of larger organisations.
- b. This question was well answered with candidates clearly differentiating between external and internal controls that may be put in place for information systems. Good answers then went on to give examples of each type of control mechanism. Some excellent answers also discussed the importance of monitoring these controls.