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# Examiners' commentaries 2015–16

## C03318 Information systems management – Zone B

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### General remarks

Overall, performance on this paper was once again an improvement on previous years. Candidates wrote more focused answers and related them directly to the material covered in the subject guide and course materials. They demonstrated an ability to apply the tools and techniques covered appropriately to the scenarios outlined in the examination paper. Answers were generally of a high standard, with only a handful of answers requiring considerable improvement. However, there are two issues to which you should pay greater attention.

Firstly, due to the types of answers this paper requires, it is helpful to start each new question, or sub-part of a question, on a new page: you should not let answers flow into each other.

Secondly, you are reminded about the importance of handwriting. The legibility of some scripts was again below standard this year. We understand you are under time pressure, but please pay attention to the readability of your answer script.

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### Comments on specific questions

The paper consisted of five questions and candidates were required to answer any three out of these five. Comments on each specific question are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

#### Question 1a.

A variety of approaches to this question were acceptable. One was to structure the answer and discuss issues such as market, technological and social pressures. This was a common approach and was a good way to answer the question. Where candidates established categories for the pressures they discussed, they received higher marks.

#### Question 1b.

Some answers were disappointing. Better answers were those where candidates discussed in detail what is meant by resources and capabilities in this context and explained that these include value, rarity and appropriability. Additional marks were achieved where answers gave examples, such as for investing in systems that support effectiveness, where the value of such systems to the organisation may be increased by using them to reduce staffing.

#### Question 2a.

This question was generally well-answered. Many candidates pointed out the importance of setting business objectives and goals in advance, as well as defining the resource requirement. Candidates scored high marks where they included discussion on the importance of a structured approach to IS planning.

**Question 2b.**

This question was straightforward, requiring students to discuss the process of conducting a re-engineering initiative, covering the following steps:

- Identifying the business vision
- Selecting the process for improvement
- Understanding and measuring existing processes
- Redesigning the process
- Managing implications of the process redesign.

**Question 3a.**

Many candidates misread the question. The question specifically asked for a discussion of technology advances. These would include advances related to Moore's law, networking and storage capabilities, etc.

**Question 3b.**

This question was well-answered. It required candidates to discuss the benefits of a new IT database. Where students categorised these benefits in some way, such as by discussing which benefits were intangible and which were tangible, additional marks were awarded.

**Question 4a.**

Candidates could have chosen a variety of frameworks but the balanced scorecard was widely selected. Some candidates correctly defined the balanced scorecard at the outset and then continued to explain that it is part of a business intelligence system. The remainder of the question was straightforward and required a detailed description of the components and functions of the balanced scorecard. Marks were also awarded where students discussed the advantages of using the balanced scorecard.

**Question 4b.**

This question was straightforward and is covered in the subject guide. Answers required the types of outsourcing to be discussed; such as: total, selective, transitional and transformational, etc.

**Question 5a.**

A wide range of issues should be considered when developing a defence strategy. These include issues such as prevention and deterrence, detection, limitation of damage, recovery, correction, awareness and compliance. Any of these issues, and more, were acceptable for discussion. Marks were awarded where candidates provided suitable examples of these issues.

**Question 5b.**

This question was well-answered. Again, there was a wide range of potential approaches to this question. Many candidates provided a good discussion on the need for IT departments to provide not only IT expertise but also input into the business at various levels; in particular, in assisting the organisation to gain a competitive advantage.