
Examiners' commentaries 2015–16

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

General remarks

The overall performance on this paper was satisfactory. There were a pleasing number of candidates who performed particularly well and obtained a distinction level grade. This commentary discusses what was required from candidates in answering the examination paper and also highlights some common areas for improvement. Candidates are reminded of the importance of ensuring that their scripts are legible and that their answers are clearly structured. Candidates are strongly urged to take care with their handwriting when writing under examination conditions. In addition, it is important to read the examination paper carefully and ensure that the correct number of questions are answered and that the answers provided contain the information which is asked for. Candidates should take care not to misread the questions on the examination paper.

The examiners would like to make the following observations which are of importance to future candidates.

- The paper consisted of **six** questions of which candidates were required to answer **four**.
- Read the questions carefully.
- Write clear and concise sentences.
- Make sure you answer all parts of questions.
- Start the answer to a question, or part of a question on a fresh page.
- Write clear and concise sentences.

The remainder of this report provides a question-by-question discussion of aspects found by the examiners marking this paper.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1a.

The answer to this question required careful reading of the case study provided, and some analytic thought. Good answers pointed out that for the Legal Advice Group to be described as a 'digital firm', its processes and major relationships would need to be technology enabled. Candidates were then required to identify five of these relationships. A wide variety of relationship choices were selected, e.g. those relationships between Legal Advice and its suppliers, etc. Finally, the question required that three core business processes be identified; for example, ordering supplies. In many cases candidates only partially answered this question, with difficulty in identifying relationships and core business processes as specified.

Question 1b.

Answers to this part of the question were of a reasonable standard and candidates clearly found this part of the question easier than 1a. A wide variety of communicating technologies could be described in this answer,

including video conferencing, etc. Most candidates recognised that the technologies described should enable face-to-face communication and training.

Question 2a.

Good answers to this question started out by defining what is meant by the concept of a business process. Thereafter it was important that a more specific business process which was pertinent to Hawk Biking Ltd be identified, such as the process of modelling a new bike. Good answers then clearly linked this process to an information system that might support it, such as the use of Computer Aided Design (CAD) software. Candidates scored higher marks for discussing how using this software could save time and effort in drafting the design, and hence result in efficiency gains for Hawk Biking Ltd.

Question 2b.

This question was well answered by the majority of candidates. Most proposed systems such as transaction processing systems to support those working on the production line, management information systems for those working in middle management and executive information systems for senior management. These were all acceptable, as were a range of other systems that were suggested, including Decision Support Systems.

Question 3a.

This was a straightforward question. However, many candidates struggled as they did not know the meaning of the term 'de-skilling'. Good answers started out by defining what is meant by the term. The remainder of the question required a justification of the candidate's own views on whether de-skilling – as a result of information systems – is necessarily the case. Additional marks were awarded where candidates provided realistic examples to support their views.

Question 3b.

In general, candidates understood the differences in the concepts of machine-centred and human-centred design. They pointed out that for machine-centred design it is assumed that people will be able to understand and relate to the system as opposed to human-centered design, which focuses on ensuring the system takes into account human capabilities, etc. in order that the system can be used effectively and provide a satisfactory experience for users.

Question 4a.

This was a straightforward question. Candidates were expected to describe the four phases of Initiation, Development, Operation and Maintenance. Marks were awarded where candidates used alternative labels for these phases and where they described further stages in this cycle. Candidates lost marks where they failed to answer the question fully; for example, where they failed to provide a detailed description of how each of these phases are undertaken, omitted to describe the outputs of each stage, etc.

Question 4b.

Where candidates were unable to describe the phases in Question 4a. they found themselves unable to answer this section of the question. Good answers gave examples of a failure which was closely linked to a particular phase, rather than simply describing generic project failures.

Question 5a.

Good answers to this question started out by defining what is meant by the concept of a 'business process'. Many candidates then went on to describe Michael Porter's value chain in order to demonstrate how value might be added at various stages of the process. Where candidates explained that the scope of a process might be both internal and external to the organisation, additional marks were scored.

Question 5b.

Good answers to this question started by defining what is meant by the concept of a value chain. They provided details of what the primary and secondary processes are in accordance with Michael Porter's value chain and then applied this value chain in the context of a restaurant.

Question 5c.

Most candidates received high marks on this question. They described the fact that a subsystem is a smaller component of a system. However, many candidates lost marks because once again, they did not answer this question in full, omitting to give an example of IT in businesses and government organisations. It is important to demonstrate that you understand how bookwork knowledge applies in practice.

Question 6a.

In order to do well on this question, candidates needed to read the scenario on Mortgage Services carefully. Having done so, it was then a matter of identifying systems such as decision support, etc., which were important. It was also important to go on to explain why the type of system selected was of relevance to Mortgage Services. Candidates who failed to do this lost marks.

Question 6b.

Once again, when candidates answered all parts of the question, they did well. This question relied on candidates having identified three types of suitable systems in 6a. They then needed to closely couple the system with one of the processes described in the case study and discuss how undertaking a process through the use of an information system might improve efficiency.