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# Examiners' commentary

## 2018–2019

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### CO3318 Information systems management – Zone B

#### 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 is still 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. An appropriate way to answer this question was to start by identifying and selecting three thrusts of competition. Many candidates did so by discussing and applying those thrusts identified by Michael Porter. For example, such thrusts could be for SMALLS to differentiate their product or service, lower their costs or focus on a market niche. However, it was a common mistake for candidates to place too much emphasis on cutting prices of the garden furniture rather than focusing on lowering their costs of production to enable a lower price to be charged for their goods. Many candidates went on to identify information systems that might be deployed in order to achieve each of these thrusts. Unfortunately, some candidates forgot to discuss the role of information systems in supporting these thrusts. This was regrettable as they lost marks by not answering the question in full as asked.
- b. Many candidates chose to discuss Michael Porter's theory on the five major competitive forces that operate within an industry. This was an appropriate way to go about answering this question. Where candidates included a diagram to support their answer they were rewarded with extra marks. In order to score high marks on this question, candidates were required to provide full discussions on how information systems might support SMALLS in resisting these forces. Where candidates did not address this issue and only discussed the forces themselves, they were not awarded the full marks available for this question.

##### Question 2

- a. In general, answers to this question were disappointing. The question was straightforward and good answers identified the type of supply chain that HEREITIS may be involved in; for example, internal or upstream supply chains. They then discussed appropriate technologies that might support the particular supply chain they had chosen and discussed. For example, support of the internal supply chain might be through transaction processing systems, production scheduling or inventory management systems. Many other good examples were included. In particular, some candidates appropriately provided descriptions of ERP systems.

- b. There was a wide range of different and acceptable answers as to the actions HEREITIS might take to facilitate the success of the implementation of the supply chain. Some very good answers suggested that the introduction of the system should be considered as a project that needs to be scoped and managed as any other project using appropriate project management techniques. They then went on to consider some of these management techniques such as training, gaining senior management support for the project, and so on. All of these were appropriate in discussing this question.

### Question 3

- a. This was a straightforward question. It is generally recognised that Information Systems defence strategies for organisations are undertaken for the purposes of prevention and deterrence, detection, limitation of damage, recovery, correction awareness and compliance. However, it was not sufficient in answering this question to merely list these activities as bullet points. In order to score high marks candidates needed to explain in some detail what each activity requires and give examples of what the risks are of not so doing. It was particularly important that the examples should be those of small organisations. Some candidates provided the bullet points but failed to discuss them in sufficient detail.
- b. This question was well answered. Most candidates pointed out from the outset the importance of undertaking an analysis of the breach and then went on to discuss how the risk would be handled and how the disaster recovery plan would be put in place.

### Question 4

- 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 CO3318 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 gave 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 with pointing out the difficulties of evaluating the financial case as a result of a number of issues such as:
  - the difficulties associated with quantifying the intangible benefits that might accrue from the introduction of the system
  - 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 5

- a. There were many different ways in which this question could be approached and that were acceptable. Many candidates followed the approach in the subject guide that considers the impact on the way in which business is conducted at the global, industry levels, etc. Candidates who scored highly on this question supported their answers with appropriate examples of the ways in which information systems had impacted at each of the levels.

- b. Answers to this part of the question were disappointing. Good answers gave a clear explanation of the concept of rights and obligations; and why these concepts might raise ethical issues. They then went on to give examples of how these two concepts provided ethical tensions for the decision maker responsible for information systems management.