
Coursework reports 2015–16

C03318 Information systems management

General remarks

This coursework assignment consisted of two short essay-type questions. Each question was awarded 50 per cent of the overall mark and therefore this signaled that students were required to devote equal effort and attention to each coursework assignment. Students were required to put the word count at the top of their coursework assignment. Most students complied with this latter requirement.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Good answers provided an introductory paragraph explaining the concept of top-down planning as a strategy for determining and developing information systems. They also explained why stating the business objectives at the outset of an information systems planning activity is necessary to ensure that the information systems developed are correctly aligned with these objectives. Having stated this, many students selected frameworks appropriately; such as those that discuss using the concept of ‘critical success factors’ in order to establish what the organisation’s objectives might be.

Most students then correctly identified that a public hospital’s objectives were unlikely to be primarily financially motivated. They discussed the fact that public hospitals are frequently state-funded and therefore are more concerned with issues surrounding patients’ care than with financial profit. Good answers included information taken from actual hospitals, detailing the hospital’s mission, as well as its aims and objectives. Typical systems could then be identified, which would potentially support each of the hospital’s objectives, such as the provision of Electronic Health Records to achieve patient satisfaction objectives.

In contrast to public hospitals, financially driven institutions such as banks are more likely to have profit maximisation as their main goal. Some answers neglected this important objective in favour of discussing the many other objectives that a bank might have. Again, good answers provided information obtained from the websites of real-world banks. Many students also appropriately discussed systems, such as customer relationship management systems, that support the bank’s objective of understanding their customers.

Overall, this part of the coursework assignment was undertaken well. However, some students failed to cite sources correctly within the text itself, and some merely provided a reference list at the end of the assignment. It is important that you provide supporting evidence for your assertions, citing sources within the text itself and providing full source details in a reference section at the end.

Question 2

Good answers defined the terms of the question from the outset and also provided details of the technique as well as its advantages.

The choice of processes was broad and those selected for discussion were mostly appropriate. Some students sensibly chose processes which they themselves had experienced. Oddly, when defining process mapping, many students pointed out that it provides a visualisation of the process, then subsequently did not provide any diagrammatic representation of the process that they had selected.

Again, you are reminded to cite sources correctly within the text and to provide a reference list at the end of the coursework assignment. You should always provide supporting evidence for your assertions, cite sources within the text and provide full source details in a reference section.

Coursework assignment 2

Question 1

There were many different ways to approach this question and a wide variety of answers were acceptable. Many students started by considering what constitutes a failure in terms of information systems and then moved on to discuss a range of explanations as to why information systems fail; such as technical, social, environmental issues, etc. Good answers were analytical with a structure placed on these categories and a discussion of the likely causes of failure provided under each heading. Evidence from the literature (correctly cited) should be included in the discussion. Some of the best answers were those where students had carefully read the question and noticed that it was asking why information systems 'seem' to fail. They therefore discussed the productivity paradox.

Question 2

This question was straightforward. Students were required to discuss both the advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing e-services. In general, this question was well answered. Where students only presented one half of the argument, either in favour or against outsourcing these services, they lost marks. However, in the main, answers provided a well-balanced approach. Marks were lost for poorly structured answers, and once again some students omitted in-text citation: it is not acceptable to simply provide a reference list – in-text citation is required.