
Examiners' commentary

2017–2018

CO3323 Electronic commerce – Zone B

General remarks

The performance in this examination was satisfactory. Candidates who carefully read the scenarios provided and wrote their answers to directly address the issues raised in these scenarios did well on this examination. This highlights the importance of reading the question very carefully. It is important to focus carefully on the question being asked and adapt answers accordingly.

Candidates are always reminded that the presentation of their work is important. Please pay particular attention to your handwriting, ensuring that your answers are legible. Also, candidates should ensure that they start each question or part of a question on a new page.

Candidates were required to answer **THREE** questions on this paper. Where a candidate answered more than three questions, only the first three questions addressed were marked, the remainder were ignored.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- a. Many candidates chose to answer this question and in general the answers were good. Some very good answers defined what is meant by an auction at the outset, for example, referring to the concept of putting an item up for bid. In some excellent answers candidates also discussed the concept of the 'shill' bidder and the legality of having these bidders at an auction. There were various alternative approaches to the auction described such as the English and Dutch auctions. In general candidates did well in describing the approaches they selected. Candidates lost marks where they did not complete their answer by discussing which approach they would select in the scenario of Marshall's Cars and supporting why they had selected this approach.
- b. Good answers to this question provided a definition of what is meant by the term virtual community and then went on to define the benefits of these communities. It was important that answers to this question made clear what is meant by the term 'stickiness'. Many candidates provided some good examples of sticky features which would attract potential customers to the community and keep them returning, however, many answers only provided two or three examples of these whereas the question clearly asked for five examples to be discussed.

Question 2

There were no sub-parts to this question. Candidates therefore needed to be confident that they could answer the entire question as it was asked. In particular, candidates needed to ensure that they addressed all the issues i.e. provided a network diagram, ten key features of the website and five features to keep customers returning to the website. The weakest part of answering this question was the network diagram. Many candidates provided a poor diagram of the network or in fact omitted to provide a diagram at all.

The result of not doing so was an immediate loss of 5 marks. A wide range of key features were mentioned and nearly all of these were acceptable, such as the ability for customers to order books online or see reviews by other customers. Similarly, most candidates provided features which would encourage customers to return to the site. The main drawback in answering this question was that some candidates failed to ensure that their answers directly addressed the issues outlined in the scenario. This demonstrates the importance of reading carefully what the question on the examination paper is asking you to do.

Question 3

- a. This was a straightforward question and many candidates chose to answer it. It required a discussion on any **FIVE** on-line promotion approaches for the scenario. A wide range of choices were available to answer this question and were appropriate. These approaches could include Google AdWords, Banner advertising, and so on. Candidates who scored high marks on this question did so because they not only provided a detailed example of the approach, but they also clearly described the benefits of the type of advertising approach they had chosen for Cocky coffee. Candidates who provided an example of a real-life website where such an approach is used scored additional marks.
- b. This question required a discussion on the important issues to be considered in choosing the best platform to use for the Web site. There are many factors to be taken into consideration such as thinking about the data storage required, back up technologies, the anticipated number of simultaneous users who will likely visit the site and the impact of this on the systems, the customer profile with their expected requests and behaviour while at the site, the nature of the content on the site, and so on. Other issues that were discussed included the capacity that would be required.

Question 4

- a. In order to answer this question appropriately candidates needed to be able to discuss the dimensions of Integrity, Nonrepudiation, Authenticity, Confidentiality, Privacy, and Availability in e-commerce security. The example of the security breach they had chosen to describe could then be linked to the particular dimension as appropriate. For example, Nonrepudiation:

An example of a repudiation incident would be a customer ordering merchandise online and later denying that he or she had done so.
- b. Good answers to this question provided a detailed description of what is meant by a Denial of Service attack giving examples of what the form of such an attack might be, such as the service running at unacceptably slow speeds. It was also appropriate to consider the way in which such attacks might be denied. Finally, candidates needed to consider the impact of such an attack on the client as well as its impact on the server.

Question 5

There were no sub-parts to this question, so it was important that candidates who chose it were very clear on the details of the value chain. In general, most answers correctly identified the major players in an industry value chain as the suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, transporters, retailers, and customers. Good answers then went on to describe how ecommerce has changed the relationship between these parties in terms of speed, reach and richness of information. Other issues that were correctly discussed were the efficiency gains derived from the introduction of e-commerce. Unfortunately, some candidates failed to provide a diagram of a value chain as requested

in the question and lost marks accordingly. This once again emphasises the importance of reading each question carefully and ensuring that you are addressing the issues that the question is asking for in full.