Examiners' commentary 2017–2018

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

General remarks

Overall, the performance on this examination was satisfactory. However, candidates are once again asked to pay attention to the presentation of their work. Please remember to write legibly, and to structure your answers in a way which shows the logic of your thinking. Make use of underlining and clear paragraph breaks. You should start each question on a new page.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

a. This was a straightforward question. Good answers provided a brief definition of outsourcing, and some excellent answers pointed out that there are various types of outsourcing. These answers then applied their definition to Rent-A-Helpline, whose intention was only to outsource their database systems. Most candidates provided five good reasons for outsourcing and scored well on this part of the question. However, candidates could have improved their answers by providing examples of companies that had outsourced their functions and where they had outsourced them to.

b. Most candidates provided two examples of the disadvantages of taking an outsourcing approach for Rent-A-Helpline, although some of these were not very solid reasons and the real-world examples referred to could have been more detailed and appropriate.

Question 2

a. This question asked for a description of five business processes that could form the value chain of a computer manufacturer. Many candidates identified five appropriate and correct business processes. However, candidates commonly failed to ensure that the processes they identified were specific to a computer manufacturer: many could have been processes from any industry.

b. Good answers tended to define what is meant by a business process at the outset. A wide range of examples of how information systems can be used to enhance the business processes of a company were given and were acceptable. These included examples of where a process is conducted manually but information systems enable the process to be conducted electronically, such as the placing of an order. Other examples included discussion on where information systems enable processes to be integrated such as those of purchasing stock and billing.

Question 3

a. This question was answered well, and candidates addressed all parts of the questions equally. Candidates not only did well in identifying two benefits from the introduction of a real-time transaction processing system for Queen Park Services, but also made their answers specific to the scenario. Candidates also showed that they could distinguish between batch- and real-time processing.

    b.   Answers to this question were good. A wide range of problems associated with using email as a means of business communication were identified and were in most cases acceptable. Very good answers focussed specifically on why emails used for business communication may be perceived as rude.

Question 4

    a.   There was a very wide range of answers to this question. Some answers focussed on the importance of the physical environment for a healthy job, and included discussions on ergonomics. Other answers placed more emphasis on issues such as the reduction of stress, avoiding long working hours, etc. In some cases, answers were too brief, and candidates did not make the most of the opportunity to elaborate on these points.

    b.   This was an interesting question, giving candidates the opportunity to express their own opinions. Some excellent points of view were put forward. There was no right or wrong answer to this question: it required a demonstration of some independent thought, and many candidates rose to the challenge.

Question 5

    a.   Good answers to this question defined NORA at the outset and explained the concept of how NORA works. Many candidates did not do this. As a result, the remainder of their answer did not address the question, as they could not relate it back to how NORA functions.

    b.   This part of the question was addressed better than part (a) in most cases. A wide range of limitations were suggested, and these answers were acceptable. Some of these answers considered issues such as the ethical questions surrounding the use of NORA, whilst others considered the range of limitations that are found in all information systems. Both approaches are acceptable, and candidates were awarded the appropriate marks.

Question 6

This question was structured differently from the previous questions in that it was divided into five sub-questions. Some candidates gave excellent descriptions of each of the technologies and paid particular attention to describing the topology. Candidates scored high marks when good technical detail was provided.