# Coursework commentary 2017–18

## CO1108 Information systems: foundations of e-business

## Coursework assignment 1

### General remarks

Some students lost marks by failing to follow the guidance given in the coursework rubric or in previous years' coursework commentaries. Students who received a fail mark in this coursework invariably did not attempt large parts of it, or submitted just a few pages. Most submissions showed students working very hard to engage with the concepts, while a pleasing proportion were very good indeed and it was a pleasure to mark them.

Students should list all references at the end of their work, and they should be properly cited whenever referred to.  Web resources need to be properly referenced, giving the URL and date visited as well as the title, author and organisation where available. Many students confused citing sources (in the text) with providing a reference list at the end – both are required. There is guidance available on the VLE.

Students are advised to use the Harvard referencing format and can avoid losing marks by doing so. See the list of references below (page 4) for examples.

Any answers that consist entirely or mostly of quoted material are unlikely to get high marks even if properly cited and referenced, as such answers do not demonstrate understanding. Copy/pasting materials from other sources is not an acceptable way to do the coursework assignment, and you are advised to learn how to paraphrase and use sources effectively when working on future assignments.

Most students remembered to submit their work as a single PDF file as required, but some did not. Examiners may be more lenient in the early stages of your degree, but in later stages you may lose marks if you fail to follow submission instructions.

The following remarks are relevant to future coursework assignments (and examinations). This advice will be generally applicable:

- Read questions carefully. In some cases, answers were given to something that was not asked, making it difficult to award marks.

- With coursework assignments the word count and mark distribution make a good guide as to how much you need to write and the level of detail required. In this coursework assignment, few submissions below 2500 words were given high marks.

- Writing coursework assignments entirely in the form of notes or a list of points will not generally work well, although bullet points can be useful (e.g. listing the key points so they are easy to identify).

- Examinations are time limited, so you should adapt your writing style accordingly (e.g. use bullet points more). You should therefore start thinking about how you will clearly present your answers to similar questions within the time limitations of an examination.

- A minority of students handed in texts with poor English and/or grammatical errors (mistakes usually involved tenses, articles or the use of the present participle). Punctuation was sometimes untidy. It is worth working on these skills as it will help your studies.

- Students need to be able to handle the EAP content at CEFR C1/Advanced to do well on this course:

  - English for Academic Purposes (EAP) resources can be found on the internet (e.g. Gillett, 2018).

  - There are also good texts on this topic (De Chazel and Moore, 2013; Meyers, 2013).

  - The classic *English Grammar in Use* series, for example Murphy (2012) and Hewings (2013), are also recommended if students feel unsure about a grammatical point.

Finally, many of the above points about referencing and good academic English apply to all your academic work, culminating in the extended report required as part of the Final Project. Getting on top of these issues now will be an excellent investment of your time.

## Comments on specific questions

The context of the four questions was given in the coursework assignment instructions:

> In this course, you have been learning the skills required to understand Information Systems from the viewpoint of a business professional. This assignment gives you the opportunity to explore and apply your understanding of the role and potential impact of Information Systems for business.

Reference will be made to the assignment objectives stated in the coursework instructions.

1. *Demonstrate an understanding of the opportunities associated with introducing information systems.*

2. *Apply appropriate frameworks and techniques learnt on the course.*

3. *Demonstrate your understanding of the impact of Information Systems on organisational internal and external relationships.*

4. *Demonstrate your ability to undertake research to support your findings.*

For each question the characteristics of high-scoring answers will be given as well as reference to areas where marks were lost needlessly.

### Question 1

The initial question asked students to discuss what is meant by supply chain systems in conjunction with identifying the benefits of such a system. For each benefit they were asked to provide a real-life example.

Good answers typically adopted the pattern of:

- Articulating what Green Computing is and explaining its key principles (with concise answers).

- Making clear what its benefits are.

- Clearly describing an example and relating it to the above.

Most students gave thoughtful answers showing a good understanding of the issues, while other answers were too brief and unfocussed with little discussion of key concepts. That said, failing to address one or more of the points on the list above was the most common way marks were lost.

## Question 2

This question asked students to identify an information system for each of the activities identified in the value chain, be that primary or secondary.

Good answers typically adopted the pattern of:

- Describing clearly the concept of a supply chain and the activities therein.
- Illustrated the above well by giving (at least one) example that was clearly linked to the concepts discussed.

Most students gave thoughtful answers which showed a good understanding of the issues, while other answers were too brief and unfocussed with little discussion of key concepts. That said, failing to address one or more of the points on the list above was the most common way marks were lost.

There was also an expectation that case studies/examples should cite a source; this was not always done.

A small number of students failed to attempt this question.

## Question 3

Here students were asked to describe five ways in which the internet has improved the quality of life, and five ways in which it has decreased the quality of life, all illustrated by including examples.

Good answers typically adopted the pattern of:

- Describing clearly five advantages and five disadvantages.
- Use of examples to illustrate the above.
- Providing sources for the above. This was done inconsistently, so it is worth highlighting - too many responses read like that of "intelligent laypeople", that is, they did not include any evidence of reading or investigation of the evidence base.

Most students gave thoughtful answers showing a good understanding of the issues, while other answers were too brief and unfocused with little discussion of key concepts. That said, failing to address one or more of the points on the list above was the most common way marks were lost.

A small number of students failed to attempt this question.

## Question 4

Question 4 asked students to discuss the extent to which they agree that there is no sustainable strategic advantage to be gained from the use of information systems.

Good answers typically adopted the pattern of:

- Clearly describing what a sustainable competitive advantage is (with sources).
- Explicitly addressing the issue of sustainability.
- Clearly describing at least one example/case study to illustrate the concept.

Most students gave thoughtful answers showing a good understanding of the issues, while other answers were too brief and unfocussed with little discussion of key concepts. That said, failing to address one or more of the points on the list above was the most common way marks were lost.

There was also an expectation that case studies/examples should cite a source; this was not always done.

For an excellent introduction to the issue a good starting point is the controversial paper by Carr (2003).

A small number of students failed to attempt this question.

## References

- Carr, N. (2003). *IT Doesn't Matter*. Harvard Business Review. May 2003. pp. 5–12.

- De Chazel, E. and Moore, J. (2013). *Oxford EAP: A Course in English for Academic Purposes (Advanced C1)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Gillett, A. (2018). *Using English for Academic Purposes For Students in Higher Education* [online]. Available at: www.uefap.net [Accessed 25 April 2018].

- Hewings, M. (2013). *Advanced Grammar in Use: A Self-Study Reference and Practice Book for Advanced Learners of English*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Meyers, A. (2013). *Longman Academic Writing Series 5: Essays to Research Papers*. Harlow: Pearson.

- Murphy, R. (2012). *English Grammar in Use: A Self-Study Reference and Practice Book for Intermediate Learners of English*. 4th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# Coursework commentary 2017–18

## CO1108 Information systems: foundations of e-business

## Coursework assignment 2

### General remarks

Some students lost marks by failing to follow the guidance given in the coursework rubric or in previous years' coursework commentaries.

Students should list all references at the end of their work, and they should be properly cited whenever referred to. Note that any answers that consist entirely or mostly of quoted material are unlikely to get high marks, even if properly cited and referenced (as you have not demonstrated understanding).

Also, there seemed to be a number of students who copy/pasted materials from other sources. This is not an acceptable way to do the coursework assignment. Therefore, learning how to paraphrase and use sources effectively will be useful for future assignments.

Students are advised to use the Harvard referencing format and can avoid losing marks by doing so. Many students confused citing sources (in the text) with providing a reference list at the end – both are needed. There is guidance available in the Study Support area on the VLE.

Students also often assumed that webpages are not cited and referenced in the same way; this is false and students are expected to use Harvard for them too.

Most students remembered to submit their work as a single PDF file as required, but some did not. Examiners may be more lenient in the early stages of your degree, but in later stages you may lose marks if you fail to follow submission instructions. If students cause difficulties for the examiners reading their submission, their work may not get marked.

The students who achieved a fail mark in this coursework assignment invariably did not attempt large parts of it, or submitted just a few pages.

Most of the submissions showed students working very hard to engage with the concepts. A pleasing proportion of the submissions were very good indeed and as such it was a pleasure to mark them.

There are also some remarks that are relevant to future courseworks assignments and examinations. This advice will be generally applicable:

- Read questions carefully. In some cases, answers were given to something that was not asked, making it difficult to award marks.

- With coursework assignements the word count and mark distribution make a good guide as to how much you need to write and the level of detail required. In this coursework assignment, few submissions below 2500 words were given high marks.

- Writing coursework assignments entirely in the form of notes or a list of points will not generally work well, although bullet points can be useful (e.g. listing the key points so they are easy to identify).

- Examinations are time limited, so you should adapt your writing style accordingly (e.g. use bullet points more). You should therefore start thinking about how you will clearly present your answers to similar questions within the time limitations of an examination.

- A minority of students handed in texts with poor English and/or grammatical errors (mistakes usually involved tenses, articles or the use of the present participle). Punctuation was sometimes untidy. It's worth working on these skills as it will help your studies.

- Students need to be able to handle the EAP content at CEFR C1/Advanced to do well on this course::

  - English for Academic Purposes (EAP) resources can be found on the internet (e.g. Gillett, 2018).

  - There are also good texts on this topic (De Chazel and Moore, 2013; Meyers, 2013).

  - The classic *English Grammar in Use* series, for example Murphy (2012) and Hewings (2013), are also recommended if students feel unsure about a grammatical point.

- Too many students write like social scientists where overly complicated language is used. This can sometimes cover up a lack of actual thought and content. In Computing a clearer, more direct, business-like style with academic sources is far more effective. You should always maintain a focus on clarity.

Finally, many of the above points about referencing and good academic English apply to all your academic work culminating in the extended report required as part of the Final Project. Getting on top of these issues now will be an excellent investment of your time.

## Comments on specific questions

The context of the four questions was given in the coursework assignment instructions:

*In this course, you have been learning the skills required to understand Information Systems from the viewpoint of a business professional. This assignment gives you the opportunity to explore and apply your understanding of the role and potential impact of Information Systems for business.*

Reference will be made to the assignment objectives stated in the coursework instructions.

1. *Demonstrate an understanding of the opportunities associated with introducing information systems.*

2. *Apply appropriate frameworks and techniques learnt on the course.*

3. *Demonstrate your understanding of the impact of Information Systems on organisational internal and external relationships.*

4. *Demonstrate your ability to undertake research to support your findings.*

For each question the characteristics of high-scoring answers will be given as well as reference to areas where marks were lost needlessly.

### Question 1

The first question asked students to describe what is meant by 'Green Computing' and whether an organisation should adopt it or not.

Despite the question asking for a business brief, most responses read like academic essays. The most appropriate style would be to write as if the student were an actual employee making recommendations to their manager, but with academic sources.

Good answers typically adopted the pattern of:

- Clearly articulating what Green Computing is and explaining its key principles (with concise answers).

- Making it clear what its advantages are (most students did this well).
- Discussing what its disadvantages are (equally important, but often forgotten).
- Some answers also talked about the challenges in implementing Green Computing (though often at a surface level).
- A few answers gave some specific, actionable recommendations; but this was usually difficult to do well because little or no company context was given in the answer.

Most students gave thoughtful answers showing a good understanding of the issues, while other answers were too brief and unfocused with little discussion of key concepts. That said, failing to address one or more of the points on the list above was the most common way in which marks were lost.

Assignment objectives 1 and 3 were addressed by this question, as was objective 4 if students were able to find and cite relevant supporting literature.

## Question 2

This question asked students to discuss what is meant by a denial of service (DoS) attack and to give a real-world example of the impact of such an attack on an organisation.

Good answers typically adopted the pattern of:

- Describing clearly what a DoS attack is. Most answers illustrated this by giving at least one example.
- The examples were then clearly related to both technical and business impacts (this is where there was some variation of answer quality).

Assignment objectives 1 and 3 were addressed by this question, as was objective 4 if students were able to find and cite relevant supporting literature.

Most students gave thoughtful answers showing a good understanding of the issues, while other answers were too brief and unfocused with little discussion of key concepts. That said, failing to address one or more of the points on the list above was the most common way in which marks were lost.

There was also an expectation that case studies/examples should cite a source; this was not always done.

A small number of students failed to attempt this question.

## Question 3

Question 3 asked students to discuss the most important questions that a feasibility study should address prior to embarking on a new software development project.

Good answers typically adopted the pattern of:

- Describing clearly what a feasibility study is.
- Finding and describing criteria around what the questions should be (plus citing the source).
- Proposing the key questions and relating them to the criteria.

Assignment objectives 1, sometimes 2 and 3 were addressed by this question, as was objective 4 if students were able to find and cite relevant supporting literature.

Most students gave thoughtful answers showing a good understanding of the issues, while other answers were too brief and unfocused with little discussion of key concepts. That said, failing to address one or more of the points on the list above was the most common way in which marks were lost.

A small number of students failed to attempt this question.

## Question 4

Here students were asked to explain why paradigm shift is the most radical form of change and to discuss why companies might undertake this type of change even though it can be extremely disruptive.

Good answers typically adopted the pattern of:

- Clearly describing what a paradigm shift is (with sources).

- Relating it to the other forms of organisational change.

- Clearly describing at least one example/case study of a paradigm shift.

- Using the example to illustrate the concept.

Assignment objectives 1, 2 and 3 were addressed by this question, as was objective 4 if students were able to find and cite relevant supporting literature.

Most students gave thoughtful answers showing a good understanding of the issues, while other answers were too brief and unfocused with little discussion of key concepts. That said, failing to address one or more of the points on the list above was the most common way in which marks were lost.

There was also an expectation that case studies/examples should cite a source; this was not always done.

A small number of students failed to attempt this question.

## References

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- Murphy, R. (2012). *English Grammar in Use: A Self-Study Reference and Practice Book for Intermediate Learners of English*. 4th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.