

Section 4: Examination Technique

This section is a reflection of observations made over many years of examining. It provides useful tips for candidates and frequently can make a difference to the final grade awarded.

Titles

Marks are frequently awarded for titles to accounting statements. The actual titles are usually given in the question. For example:

Prepare the Trading and Profit and Loss Account for the year ended 31 March 2006.

Some candidates will abbreviate the title and put the date 'as at'. If a mark is allocated for the title it must be correctly presented. In a set of final accounts the name of the business should also be shown at the start.

Accounting narratives

In addition to marks for titles, marks are also awarded for the correct accounting narrative within an answer. Frequently marks will be awarded for narratives such as:

Cost of Sales

Gross Profit

Net Profit

Working Capital

Long Term Liabilities

Within a ledger account the correct narratives should also be used for the name of the account where the double entry can be found as marks can also be awarded here.

General rather than specific

Questions frequently ask for a narrative response for a specific application, for example, concepts related to depreciation. Candidates should not respond with just a general commentary on concepts, rather they should relate to how the concepts are applied specifically to depreciation.

Writing out the question

Sometimes candidates will write out the question before providing an answer. Writing out the question wastes time and does not gain any marks.

Answer the question

It is important for candidates to answer the question set, rather than respond with what they would have liked the question to be. For example, responding with ledgers rather than journals.

Spelling

Included in the mark scheme are marks for quality of written communication. Particularly concerning is when candidates incorrectly spell standard accounting terminology. Words frequently presented with incorrect spelling include:

depreciation

accruals

consistency

received

Use of ruler

Quality of written communication marks are also awarded for presentation. The use of a ruler will improve presentation.

Space out accounting statements

If an accounting statement will not fit on a section of a page, then it is advisable to start on a new page. Frequently candidates start a statement, for example, Balance Sheet half way down a page and continue on the next page. Errors are more likely when this happens.

Space out narrative responses

Candidates should present narrative responses in a manner that is easy for the examiner to follow. Techniques such as bullet points and leaving spaces between paragraphs will make the text easier to follow. Presenting three advantages in separate bullet points will improve presentation compared to combining the three advantages in one large paragraph.

Balancing/Ruling off

The requirement to balance ledger accounts is common throughout the specification. The balance c/d narrative should be entered in the correct place and accounts should be totalled and ruled off on the same line.

Point/Development

Frequently questions will ask for an outline response, for example, outline advantages of control accounts. One advantage would be to prevent fraud and if candidates just state prevent fraud, then one mark would be awarded. For additional marks candidates should develop answers as to how control accounts do prevent fraud.

Own figure rule

Sometimes marking schemes will show a mark as an own figure i.e. 1 (of). This means that if an earlier value is incorrect, but a candidate has subsequently used it correctly, then a mark will be awarded. In such cases it is important that a candidate uses the earlier own figure rather than entering a balancing value. For example, in the financed section of a Balance Sheet, 1 (of) against net profit will be for using the net profit value from the Trading and Profit and Loss Account and it is this value that must be used. Replacing by another value that makes the Balance Sheet balance will result in no mark being awarded.