

THE BCS PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION

Diploma

April 2000

EXAMINERS' REPORT

Service Management

Question 1

Over 90% of candidates attempted this question and of those approximately 77% obtained a pass

Your organisation has discovered that PC hardware and software is being purchased in small quantities by individual groups and departments.

- a) Discuss the impact this might have on the organisation and how you could address it.
- b) Detail the actions you would take to address any problems arising from this style of purchasing.
 - Low volumes being purchased, best price not obtained
 - Variety of computer hardware and software purchased
 - Difficulty in providing support and maintenance
 - Version control difficult between users
 - Difficult to provide upgrade solutions e.g. Y2K fixes
 - License and inventory information not held centrally, lack of corporate control and accountability.
 - Demonstrate to senior management the cost savings involved in a central purchasing/support policy
 - Show users the benefits to them of a properly supported operation - then make sure you deliver it!

This question proved popular with candidates, some of who had apparently come across similar situations in the course of their work or studies. A number of very elegant solutions were proposed - although some were quite robust in their nature. The need to find a solution which fits the culture of the organisation is an important element of a fully satisfactory answer.

Question 2.

Candidates appeared to find this question the most difficult some 70% attempted the question with only 51% reaching a pass standard.

Marks were available for report format.

Answers were expected to include

- Risk Identification, Threats related to computer crime
- Threats related to accidents
- Risk Analysis, Quantify probability & expected frequency of identified risks.
- Assess severity of consequences.
- Risk Handling, Select controls & counter measures.
 - avoid - reduce - retain - eliminate threats

- Disaster Recovery/Contingency plan for recovery from likely disaster.
 - Aspects of data security, access/confidentiality/backup/physical security
 - Identify threats & costs to organisation./costs of reducing
 - Comply with data protection/security legislation
 - Analyse business report
- A few candidates included issues which were not relevant e.g. operational data processing activities , physical aspects of data – completeness/batch id/hash totals etc.

Question 3

Some 60% of candidates attempted this question and of those 65% obtained a pass.

- Environmental issues - accommodation, telecom services etc.
- Network infrastructure - capacity, testing, certification etc.
- Migration issues - criteria for establishing the new service while the original service is still in operation.
- Human factors - availability of support staff at new location.
- Investment issues - move existing kit or invest in new equipment.

This question was an attempt to provide a scenario which many candidates could identify with from their own experience. The bulk of the marks were divided equally between the way in which technical issues were addressed and how managerial and organisational matters were tackled. In general, the technical aspects of the answer were better presented by the candidates - with marks being lost as a result.

Several candidates distinguished themselves by looking in more detail at the question and defining their assumptions about the nature of the exercise. This was entirely appropriate and enabled them to provide a very complete answer.

Question 4.

Some 76% of candidates attempted this question and of those 82% obtained a pass.

part a),

The idea behind this question was to enable candidates to demonstrate their knowledge in a context of their own choice. Thus they were expected to select a type of organisation they were familiar with, through experience or from case studies. Computing students should take note of the way in which data is collected and information produced during their every day life.

Some candidates took a literal view of the question and gave very detailed and specific information requirements e.g. Accounts Dept./Personnel Dept. etc.

In all cases where the information and reasons why it was required were given marks were obtained.

The question was looking for the standard book answer covering the need for information in Strategic/ Tactical/ Operational areas of an organisation. Where candidates mentioned MIS/ EIS/ DIS marks were awarded, however marks were not given for descriptions of such systems.

part b),

As required many candidates suggested the types of information needed for people to do their jobs;

Including fitness for purpose, on time, accurate

The more informed candidate discussed

- people in Strategic/ Tactical/ Operational levels of the organisation
 - the need for external/ internal information;
- detailed/ summary; historical/ upto date information

Question 5.

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Some 57% of candidates attempted this question and of those 63% obtained a pass.

The Managing Director was heard to remark: "Why should we have the Head of Information Systems on the Board? It is a service department, just like the canteen..."

Discuss the issues you would use to demonstrate, to the MD, the strategic importance of Information Systems to the business organisation.

- IS/IT has the power to give strategic advantage to the organisation if it is managed correctly
- IS/IT has the power to make the company uncompetitive or inefficient if it is handled incorrectly
- If the Head of IS is the right person, he/she will be able to look at business need and produce IS/IT solutions to match the requirement - but only if they have a high level of strategic information from Board level
- In many organisations electronic data forms the core raw material. The product of the organisation is electronic information. The key skills in the manufacturing phase depend on IS/IT.

The wording of this question was left fairly open in order to allow candidates to explore this critical issue. Some candidates who attempted the question confused "Information Systems" with "Information Technology". While this covered some elements of the answer, some candidates failed to reach their potential as a result.

Question 6.

The least popular question with 44% of candidates selecting the question and of those 64% passed.

part a),

Stating the composition of steering committee obtained credit.

The role of the committee includes

- reporting to management
- ensuring cost / benefits
- establishing overall policy
- meeting user needs
- evaluating feasibility study
- prioritizing & coordinating

part b)

The answers were expected to include

- slow processing & retrieval
- loss of customer goodwill
- reduced staff morale/confidence
- inefficiency/duplication
- loss of data, poor security

Credit was obtained by those who included discussion of implementation.