

**THE BCS PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION  
Diploma**

**April 2002**

**EXAMINERS' REPORT**

**Service Management**

The number of candidates selecting this option increased slightly this year. However many of the scripts contained answers well below the level required to pass and an overall pass rate of 53% is disappointing.

Many of the failures are due to candidates not answering the question being attempted. More advice to candidates on examination technique is needed.

An indication is given below of the points expected; however any valid point which was relevant to the question received marks.

**Question 1**

- a). **Discuss the different facilities which are provided by Executive Information Systems (EIS) and Management Information Systems (MIS).** (12 marks).
- b). **Suggest, with reasons, which levels within a business organisation would utilise an EIS or an MIS to gain the advantages of each.** (13 marks).

Of the 53% of candidates who attempted this question 46% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was 9.5.

**Answer pointers**

There was some confusion as to whether the question related to Project Management systems. Some candidates considered that MIS controlled or was responsible for the entire Information System or that in some way an MIS ensured that all levels of management were doing their jobs properly.

The points expected included:-

a) **EIS.**

Sophisticated graphics allows interaction & makes output understandable. to non-computer literate managers.

Employs summaries & drilling down to detail.

Supports Management by Exception.

Flexible data manipulation & presentation.

Users analysis tools & leads to 'what if' analysis, trends etc.

**MIS.**

Uses output from existing TP systems to aid decision making.

Structure is rigid, more suitable to stable environment.

Analytical powers limited, produces standard reports.

Deals with past performance information.

12 marks

b) **EIS**

Strategic & Tactical levels

Unstructured decision making at top level

**MIS**

All levels for planning, organising, directing & controlling

Middle management, provides information for decision making

13 marks

**Question 2**

**a) Describe briefly three of the eight data protection principles which form the basis of the 1998 Data Protection Act. (12 marks).**

**b) Discuss in detail the impact of ONE of these principles, described in a), on the way a computing service is run. (13 marks).**

Of the 59% of candidates who attempted this question 63% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was 9.5.

Answer pointers

(a) Simple descriptions of three of the eight principles are required for this section of the question. The candidate should be able to demonstrate a clear understanding of these principles without confusion. A small number of candidates presented combined or confused descriptions.

Up to 4 marks for the description of each of three principles of the 1998 Data Protection Act.

(b) There was some flexibility about the way this section was handled. The context probably depended to a large extent on the work experience of the candidate. Typical examples could be the retention of user registration information after the staff have left, or the policy on the logging of web access to sites whose content may deal with "sensitive personal information" - e.g. sexuality.

Up to 4 marks for the elaboration of the description of a single principle

Up to 5 marks for the analysis of the impact of that principle on the way a computing service is run

Up to 4 marks for the style and credibility of the response

**Question 3**

**A 'travel company' which provides packaged holidays for their customers is considering the development of an Internet site in order to market their holidays.**

**a). Contrast the advantages of writing the entire software for the site with the advantages of purchasing a general web-site and tailoring this general web- site to the company needs. (12 marks).**

**b). Discuss how an Internet site can be used to add value to the products of the 'travel company', which needs to differentiate its services from the services provided by competitors. (13 marks)**

Of the 82% of candidates who attempted this question 36% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was just above 8.

## Answer pointers

Some rather good ideas here but a good many candidates spoiled their answer by discussing the **differences** between the 2 options rather than **advantages** as requested in the question.

The points expected included:-

- a) Control of software rests with the travel company
  - Amendments etc. done without having to apply to software supplier.
  - Can be produced to specific needs of the travel company
  - Language, graphics etc. fit company image better.
  - Can be linked to accommodate the way the travel company operates.
  
- b) User friendly – customers with limited IT knowledge accept system.
  - Attractive to customers, Information on holiday venues supplied
  - could use sound/video
  - Links to other sites to allow customers more information and provide on-line booking facilities, 24/7 availability, Credit card security
  - In the home therefore no visits to High St. premises required.
  - On going communication with past customers.

## Question 4

- a) **Describe three techniques which a small company could use to provide in-house training for their office staff. All the office staff carry out clerical roles and they need to learn to use a new desktop operating system and new standard office products.** (12 marks)
  
- b) **Produce a plan which clearly demonstrates how you would introduce one of these techniques into the company, and describe three elements of the plan which would be critical to its success.** (13 marks)

Of the 38% of candidates who attempted this question 71% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was 10.5.

## Answer pointers

(a) Techniques could include external trainer providing bespoke courses, availability of self-training materials and software to allow staff to tackle (e.g) ECDL - or day release to external training for nominated team trainers.

Up to 4 marks for each of three techniques which could be used by a small company

(b) Project plan is to show that the candidate can effectively schedule this type of operation. Critical elements include staff buy-in, management conviction and support, provision of adequate training resources and allowing people the time to undertake it outside, or in association with, their normal duties and environment.

A number of candidates used gantt charts, or similar, to demonstrate the project plan. This approach was successful where the supporting information was also present.

Up to 2 marks for the format of the project plan

Up to 5 marks for the composition and viability of the plan

Up to 2 marks for each three elements of the plan which would be critical to it's success

### Question 5

- a). As the project manager responsible for the development and implementation of a new information system, discuss why you should consider involving the users throughout the process. (13 marks)
- b). From the users viewpoint, discuss the merits of the three main methods used for implementing a new information system. (12 marks)

Of the 83% of candidates who attempted this question 39% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was 8.

#### Answer pointers

A rather disappointing response. In part a) many candidates discussed project management rather than giving the answer to "why the users should be involved." Part b) showed no real understanding of changeover methods i.e. phased & pilot methods, or that these methods meant department or site changes to the new system and then to cascade through the organisation. For some reason a few candidates related their answers to Prototyping or Rapid Development Methods.

Points expected included :-

- a) Users know the business objectives therefore involvement is vital.  
Users know what is required of **their** new system  
SSADM stresses need for users to authorise Specification Requirements  
Involvement of users will reduce misunderstandings during Investigation & Design stages, Users are able to see and review prototypes.
- b) The three were:- Direct Changeover, Parallel Running, Pilot/Phased Running

### Question 6

**The organisation for whom you work has recently added Internet access to all the personal computers in the administration offices.**

- a) Describe three areas of concern which the senior management should consider regarding this new development. (9 marks)
- b) For each concern which you described in (a) above, provide a technical or organisational solution. (16 marks)

Of the 83% of candidates who attempted this question 60% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was 10.

#### Answer pointers

Typical concerns include staff without authority committing the organisation to a sale or purchase, staff sending defamatory information which results in loss of face and potential legal responsibility on the part of the organisation, security of inbound and outbound communication - policy for firewalls etc., staff using web access for inappropriate purposes.

Fixes for these will almost certainly involve strong - but not necessarily draconian - management policies. These policies might benefit from being sweetened by enough concessions to help ensure compliance.

A number of candidates gave responses which would be expensive or impractical to enforce, and which would possibly breach human rights legislation. A pragmatic balance between feasibility, cost and effectiveness was the overall aim of the question.

Part (a) - 9 marks

Up to 3 marks for each of three areas of concern.

Part (b) - 16 marks

Up to 4 marks for each of three potential solutions to the concerns expressed in (a)

Up to 4 marks for the overall style and approach taken to address the issues.