

**THE BCS PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION
Diploma**

April 2003

EXAMINERS' REPORT

Service Management

General

The number of candidates selecting this option continue to increase and rose by 26% this year. However many of the scripts contained answers considerably below the level required to obtain a pass and the overall pass rate dropped from 53% last year to a very disappointing 32%. It would appear a number of candidates have not covered the full syllabus. Although they may be able to find one question on which they have the necessary knowledge they provide non relevant answers to other questions.

In addition many of the failures are due to candidates not answering the question as set. As stated in the report for the previous year candidates should seek advice on examination technique and ensure they study the full syllabus.

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

Question 1

The Managing Director (MD) of the company for whom you work, as the Head of IT, believes that his staff do not have confidence in the service provided by the Information Technology (IT) group. The MD has told you that this situation must be resolved.

- a) Write a memorandum to the MD describing briefly how you will seek to improve the level of confidence in the IT group. (10 marks)**
- b) Describe in detail THREE key exercises you will carry out in order to bring about the improvement in the level of confidence required by the MD. (15 marks)**

In general, this question was not answered well. Some candidates appeared not to accept that they could be providing an unpopular service and took an antagonistic approach to their response. This approach might be risky, to say the least, in a real life situation. There was considerable use of a "blame" culture - which is unlikely to deliver benefits to the organisation.

In section (a), up to two marks were awarded for the use of standard memo format, up to four marks for the degree of credibility of the proposals and up to four marks for the written style in which the memo was presented. A number of candidates lost marks by presenting their answer in essay format. In section (b), up to five marks were awarded for each of the three key exercises. Of the 79% of candidates who attempted this question 58% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was 9.

Answer Pointers

- Meet with customers, perhaps on neutral ground, to see what they believe the issues are.
- Take the grievances seriously and be prepared to acknowledge errors.
- Find ways of providing outreach from your group to the customers. Look at your use of publicity and information flows.
- Find common ground in seeking to improve service delivery.
- Collaborate with customers on a document for senior management to define a service improvement model that the MD will accept and fund.

Question 2

A large Banking organisation has recently introduced mobile telephone banking and has projected that 2 million customers would take up this service within 2 years. However customers have not taken up this service as rapidly as the Bank intended.

- a) Identify ten social and technological issues that may have prevented the Bank from reaching its mobile telephone banking target.**

(10 marks)

- b) The Bank is negotiating a new 5 year contract with a telephone network provider to support the mobile telephone banking network. The network, of the current provider, only reaches 65% of the country. Discuss the issues which the Bank should consider when negotiating the network contract.**

(15 marks)

On the basis that the question asked candidates to “identify”, full credit was given for bullet point answers with limited discussion.

Part a). was answered quite well some aspects identified by candidates included – types of ‘phone customers may have been different; customers need to know how to use the telephone system; health scares connected to mobile phone use.

In this part b) there was a tendency for candidates to make up their own scenarios & then to enlarge the question in order to bring in points which were not really relevant.

Some good additional points included – security issues/risk evaluation for system; Service Level Agreements; new system should meet IS standards of Bank.

Of the 74% of candidates who attempted this question 64% achieved a pass standard.

The average mark was 11.

Answer Pointers

Main points expected included-

a). Social Issues;

- Customers reluctance to access banking services from public places,
- Public concern over security of Internet & mobile ‘phone media,
- Loss of ‘phone – information may be stored in memory,

- No paper records,
- Reluctance to change – learn new ways of banking.

Technological Issues,

- Reliability of mobile 'phone services - loss of signal during transactions,
- Not all customers can reach network,
- Customers who travel outside network area not covered,
- Cost of mobile 'phone, Cost of using network,
- Customers may postpone joining new service until tried & tested,
- Security issues,
- Customers may wait for future developments in 'phone technology.

b) The main points expected were:

- Costs – passed onto customers 5 year period, costs may rise.
- Reliability – penalty clauses for down time,
- Coverage – network Company needs to improve area coverage,
- Performance – need to investigate background of Network Company,
- Length of Contract – Bank will be tied in for 5 years, many new developments may occur.
- Bank may need to include 'get out' clauses if performance deteriorates.

Question 3

A number of additional staff have been employed to carry out standard commercial office tasks using networked personal computers. You are aware that several of the new staff have very limited experience of using personal computers.

a) Produce a training plan which will allow your company to bring all the new staff up to an effective level of IT literacy within the next month.

(10 marks)

b) The staff to be trained have very different learning backgrounds and therefore the plan should identify three different training techniques. State any resources that you would need to deliver the training.

(15 marks)

In general, the responses to this question were very weak. A number of candidates had problems with the development of a training plan. This weakness meant that they had difficulty in presenting a coherent set of proposals, deliverables and checks - resulting in a low mark. Similarly, some candidates described techniques which differed only in minor detail - which limited their scope for good marks.

In section (a), up to five marks were awarded for the structure of the plan and up to five marks for the credibility of the plan and the likelihood of it succeeding. In section (b) up to five marks were awarded for each of three techniques (see note above).

Of the 87% of candidates who attempted this question 40% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was 9.

Answer Pointers

- In-house trainer providing tailored courses on the key attributes needed for the common tasks.
- CD-ROM/DVD courses available on non-work machines - with staff being encouraged to spend uninterrupted time working at them. Some courses available on loan laptops so that staff can work outside the office environment if they prefer.
- Training at an external facility so that staff are away from the pressures of the work environment.

Question 4

The Board of a large organisation has recently questioned the viability of maintaining an Information Centre to support the IT systems of the organisation.

- a) **As the Manager of the Information Centre write a memo to the Board supporting the retention of the centre.**
(10 marks)
- b) **Discuss how the Information Centre could support departments of the organisation in the use of its internal and external network facilities.**
(15 marks)

Two marks were allocated for a well formatted memo.

Part a). was quite well answered. Some relevant issues attracting credit related to keeping the IC and the fact that staff were familiar with the present support and the response time for queries would be quite fast; also, although not referred to in the question, alternatives e.g. outsourcing, might be more expensive & less beneficial.

In part b) candidates generally attracted less credit, mainly because they did not address their answers to the question and simply repeated what they had given in part a). Of the 48% of candidates who attempted this question 34% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was only 7.

Answer Pointers

- a) Justification;
Help Desk facilities
Keeping standards for h/w, s/w information storage etc
Help support systems ; advice on faults, failure
Introduce & maintain use of methodologies e.g. system development
- b) Examples expected include-
On-line help
Remote diagnostics & correction
Computer based training
Help with e-mail etc.
Security of networks, training etc.

Question 5

A report by an external auditor is highly critical of the way in which your organisation fails to manage software licences. The organisation, which has three hundred personal computers, is based on four sites all of which are located within a large city.

Produce a report to the chairman of the organisation outlining a method for handling software licences in the organisation. Your report should be in three sections as follows:

- a) Procurement. (8 marks)
- b) Management. (9 marks)
- c) Audit. (8 marks)

A number of the answers to this question were somewhat confused and consisted largely of reports discussing the copyright status of software. Much irrelevant information was included, and little clarity was delivered.

In section (a), up to five marks were awarded for the content and credibility of the method offered and up to three marks for the style of delivery. In section (b), up to six marks were awarded for the content and credibility of the method offered and up to three marks for the style of delivery. In section (c), up to five marks were awarded for the content and credibility of the method offered and up to three marks for the style of delivery.

Of the 24% of candidates who attempted this question 72% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was 11.

Answer Pointers

- Explore site and enterprise scale licence packages for the core software products.
- Control privileges for downloading and installing software.
- Control removable media and external network access.
- Adopt server launched software model
- Move to thin client model
- Install and monitor (!) enterprise management software

Question 6

- a) Discuss five reasons why it may be considered essential for an organisation to implement an IS strategy. (15 marks)
- b) From your own experience provide examples to support two of the reasons Discussed in a) above. (10 marks)

As the statistics below clearly show, although many candidates attempted the question most had little knowledge of IS strategy. There was confusion over IS and business strategy. Some candidates believed that IS Strategy was an application system, similar to payroll or stock control.

In part a) some credit was given for issues relating IS Strategy in forming the basis for education and training on security issues within the organisation.

In part b) candidates were expected to demonstrate their understanding by supporting their answer in part a) with examples taken from their own experience or from case studies.

Attempts were quite irrelevant, mainly centred round a discussion of information required by different levels of management e.g. Strategic/tactical/operational.

Of the 86% of candidates who attempted this question 16% achieved a pass standard. The average mark was 5.

Answer Pointers

- Changes in IT and its effect
- Importance of Information to organisations
- Plan for future developments
- Linking IT with business strategy
- Use of systems e.g. e-mail