

THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF PAKISTAN

EXAMINERS' COMMENTS

SUBJECT	SESSION
Information Technology	Intermediate Examination - Spring 2008

General:

Majority of the candidates attempted all questions and were able to perform well in most of them. The others were either not able to understand the questions or did not possess enough knowledge to come up with an appropriate answer. An interesting trend among the latter type of students was to write whatever they knew about a particular topic or term referred to in the question without considering the context in which they were required to be discussed. They are advised to understand that no benefit can be derived unless the answer is relevant and related to the question.

Question-wise comments are given hereunder:

- Q.1 (a) This part of the question was well attempted and most of the candidates were able to identify the types of controls applicable in the given situations, except the controls for 'flooding'. Installation of water pumps, water proof ceiling, raised floor and cabinets, provision of adequate drainage and avoiding installation of computers in the basement are some examples of such controls.
- (b) Most candidates were unable to grasp the actual requirements of the question and instead of mentioning the ways to mitigate the losses, they repeated the controls which had already been mentioned in part (a). Arranging offsite storage of backup and adequate insurance cover for IT infrastructure are commonly used to mitigate the extent of losses identified in the question.
- Q.2 It was an easy and a good scoring question. Although most of the candidates were successful in identifying the correct type of control but many of them were unable to give proper reasons to support their classification.
- Q.3 (a) Most of the candidates were able to explain the basic difference between e-mails and instant messages i.e. that an e-mail remains unread in a recipient's in-box until opened whereas the instant messenger notifies the users as soon as they are online and able to accept messages.
- (b) This part was generally well-attempted and majority of the candidates successfully identified the factors which have restricted the use of instant messaging in corporate world such as (i) easily exposed to hackers (ii) increase in virus attacks (iii) wastage of time and (iv) confidentiality lapses etc.

- Q.4 Both parts of this question were easy and provided a good scoring opportunity. In part (a), many candidates were confused between a search engine and an email service. Most of the candidates identified only a few search engines such as Google, AltaVista, MSN and Yahoo. Search engines like HotBot, Lycos, Ask, Excite and HogSearch were mentioned by few candidates only.

In part (b) very few candidates were able to identify the simple difference between searching with and without inverted commas i.e. when two or more words are entered within inverted commas, the search engine will return only those pages where those words are appearing together in the same sequence whereas, if the same words are entered without inverted commas, the search engine will return all those pages where those words are appearing, regardless of their sequence or whether they are appearing alone or together.

- Q.5 (a) Most of the candidates successfully identified the benefits of networking in corporate environment, such as: it enables sharing of files, softwares and peripheral equipments, avoids duplication and establishes centralized control etc.
- (b) This was also a very easy question and was well attempted by most of the candidates.

- Q.6 (a) Most of the candidates successfully identified the services which an operating system provides to the users, which include:
- System file management.
 - Sending instructions to the application programs.
 - Allocating memory to the processor and making it available on completion of the process.
 - Recovery from system errors.

However, majority of them were unable to explain how it controls and facilitates application programs i.e. by defining user interface, permitting users to share data, hardware and other resources and by identification of errors in Input/Output programs etc.

- (b) A large number of candidates mentioned the names of system/utility programs instead of 'types' of system/utility programs. Access Control Software, Data Communication Software, Database Management Software, Program Library Management System and Network Management Software are the types of system/utility programs which were required to be quoted.
- Q.7 (a) Majority of the students successfully identified the matters that should be contained in a formal post implementation review report such as review of system performance, weaknesses in the system, cost benefits review and recommendations for improvement etc.
- (b) Regular software maintenance helps to avoid break downs and correct previously undetected software errors. These in turn keep the program efficient and enhance its reliability. Unfortunately, a large number of candidates were unable to correctly answer this easy question on the above lines.

- Q.8 (a) A good number of students were able to identify the main components of an expert system i.e. Knowledge Base, Inference Engine and User Interface. However, many of them mixed up the role of inference engine and user interface. Many students identified the components correctly but could not give a proper explanation specially in the case of 'User interface'.
- (b) Majority of the students were unable to explain why expert system was not suitable for ICPL. Had they focused on the components, working and updation requirements of an expert system and related them to the situation given in the question, they could have given a good answer.

According to the given scenario ICPL was a large FMCG company whose sales graph mainly depended on the trends and preferences of its customers. The customers' needs depended on various factors and were greatly affected by environmental changes. Therefore, the domain for ICPL's expert system may become very vast and its rules could become complex. These rules are greatly inter-dependent and change in one rule may require re-building of the entire system. Moreover, capturing the expert knowledge and experiences for describing the unforeseen events is another uphill task, because experts may have divergent views in specific situations. In view of the above limitations, the use of an expert system may not have seemed suitable in the case of ICPL.

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