BCS The Chartered Institute for IT

Guidelines for Candidates taking the BA and SD Oral Exams May 2022

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1.   Introduction

The Business Analysis (BA) and Solution Development (SD) oral examinations are the final element of the programme to gain the BCS International Diploma Certification.

To take the oral examination, you need to have sat and passed:

- one examination for each of the two core certificate modules.
- one examination for a module selected from the set of knowledge-based specialist certificate modules.
- one examination for a module selected from the set of practitioner specialist certificate modules.

2.   Attending the oral examination

Two weeks before you are due to sit your exam, you will receive an email confirming your booking and a link to your online meeting via Teams.

Please ensure you log in to your meeting at least 15 minutes before your examination.

You should consider the oral examination a business interview and dress accordingly. Part of the oral examination considers your professionalism and ability to work with staff at all levels in an organisation. Accordingly, your ability to communicate effectively is also considered.

Please note that sometimes delays occur during the oral examination session therefore your examination may begin later than the scheduled start time. It is advisable to consider this when scheduling your examination. If you are unable to attend your exam, please let BCS/Training Provider know as soon as possible.

3.   Preparing for the Oral Examination

The oral examination is based upon the latest syllabus. The syllabus sets out the topic areas that may be covered in the oral examination. It is your responsibility to prepare for the oral examination and to ensure that you have enough knowledge of the topics in the syllabus.

Although the Oral Examination Preparation Days, offered by Accredited Training Providers are not mandatory it is strongly recommended that you attend one so that you get a better understanding of what the actual oral examination will be like. It will also help you understand the rationale of the oral examiner's questioning.

Please note that the oral examination may contain subjects you have not encountered during your previous study; the oral examiners may examine you on these topics in the oral examination.

4.   Bloom's Taxonomy

Each section of the syllabus is allocated a Knowledge (K) level. These are based on Bloom's taxonomy of knowledge in the cognitive domain and can be broadly interpreted as follows:

K1 – Remember
K2 – Understand
K3 – Apply

K4 – Analyse
K5 – Synthesise
K6 – Evaluate

The Knowledge Levels are explained in greater detail in the relevant syllabus.

5.   Examination format

The oral examination will last up to 50 minutes and be conducted by two examiners. You need to log into Microsoft Teams using the log-in link provided in the invitation.

1. Once you are logged in you will remain in the virtual lobby until you are invited into the exam session by the examiners.
2. There will be two examiners present during the exam.
3. The examiners will introduce themselves and ask you to show them your photographic ID.
4. You will be asked to sweep your laptop around the room so that the examiners can check your environment is suitable and no exam material is visible.
5. The examiners will start asking you about your experience.
6. The first examiner will ask questions; this should last approximately 25 minutes.
7. The second examiner will ask questions; this should last approximately 25 minutes.
8. The oral examination will finish.
9. You will leave the session.

6.   The Nature of the Questions

The new oral examination syllabus was introduced in March 2022 and a period of transition from the old to the new syllabus is in place until 31st August, when the old syllabus (V3.0) will be withdrawn. The transition period is being carefully managed by the oral examiners so that candidates and training providers are not adversely affected. Accordingly, examiners will **NOT** ask questions relating to topics introduced in the new syllabus (V3.3), unless a candidate references a technique or concept from the new syllabus when answering a question. In this case, the examiners will determine if this is an acceptable response and decide if further discussion is needed. Similarly, examiners will not ask questions about a topic that is not within the new version of the syllabus but will discuss this if it is introduced by a candidate and is relevant to the question posed. With effect from 1 September, all candidates must prepare for their oral examination using the new syllabus, as the old syllabus will be invalid at that point.

The questions asked by the oral examiner will require you to discuss and apply the topics in the oral examination syllabus. They may require you to demonstrate knowledge of a specific subject area, or to apply knowledge to a given scenario. The questioning may cover a topic in overview or may require more detailed knowledge. The questions are designed to explore the interconnections between the different subjects and to examine your ability to apply techniques or combinations of techniques to different situations.

The examiners are looking for you to demonstrate the following aspects of performance:

- knowledge of the key principles and content of the subjects in the syllabus.
- the part each of the techniques and concepts plays.
- how you might apply the techniques and concepts in the workplace.
- the purpose of the techniques and concepts.

While you may be involved in using some of the techniques in the workplace, you should avoid turning every question into a description of your own organisation. It is important that you demonstrate an ability to take a broader perspective regarding the techniques and concepts. The examiners will be looking for this broader perspective when considering your responses to their questions.

7.   Techniques – SD Only

As part of your modules, you will have covered a specific systems development life cycle approach (e.g. waterfall or agile) and the specific techniques that may support the chosen life cycle approach (e.g. Structured or object oriented). The core module, "Systems Modelling Techniques" may be taken using either structured or UML models. Your oral examiners will be aware of which version of the exam you have passed and will only expect you to know about the models covered in that version.

8.   Techniques – BA and SD

You will not be asked to draw any models relating to a case study scenario, but you may be asked for your opinion of their usefulness and relevance. You will be expected to understand how the range of techniques relevant to the Diploma may be used, when you would use them and how they could help you.

9. Assessment

The examiners will assess your performance in each section of the oral examination syllabus. They also include assessment of your competence in logical reasoning, communication, and professionalism. The oral examiners comment on any specific areas of weakness demonstrated by candidates who fail the oral examination.

10. What to expect when you take an online examination

Oral exams are conducted on Teams and there are several steps to take prior to the day. This is to ensure that you are fully able to access the examination and will not encounter technical difficulties.

Your responsibilities are to ensure:

- You have the relevant IT equipment to carry out the exam, if you require a connectivity test please email **eprofessional@bcs.uk**
- Be logged in at the correct time, ready to commence.
- You have a suitable room to take the exam, the room should be quiet and free from any background distractions – the examiners will ask you to sweep your screen around the room.
- You have suitable photographic ID (driver's license or passport)
- Your mobile phone is switched off and put away and there are no other electronic devices nearby.

11. Starting the exam

When commencing the exam, there are key points to consider should technical issues arise:

- If connection cannot be made within 10 minutes of the start time, you will need to contact BCS on *+44 (0) 1793 417 716* or **eprofessional@bcs.uk** . The examination may be terminated depending on the nature of the issue.
- If the examiners are unable to make contact with you, you will receive an email to confirm that the exam has had to be terminated.
- If one examiner loses visual connection, the exam can continue if they still have audio connection and the second examiner has visual connection.
- If visual connection is lost for both examiners for 5 minutes or more, the examination will be terminated.
- If you, the candidate, goes offline for more than 5 minutes once the exam has commenced, then exam conditions have been broken and the exam will be terminated.

- If visual connection cannot be achieved initially by at least one examiner, the examination will not be able to take place.
- If one examiner loses both visual and audio connection the exam may need to be terminated – if all questioning has been competed, then it will continue and the remaining examiner will end the exam.
- If connection is poor and affecting the ability to converse (time lags for example) to such a degree that the examiner decides your performance is being affected, then the exam will need to be terminated.

12. Notification of Oral Examination Results

You will be notified of your result within two weeks of the date of the interview. The examiners will not issue verbal results on the day of the oral examination. If you fail the oral examination, you will be given brief feedback on the areas of weakness.

13. Conclusion

The oral examination is an assessment of your suitability to work as a Business Analyst or part of a System Development Team. The award of the Diploma signifies that you have successfully demonstrated the ability to conduct Business Analysis/Systems Development work. The Diploma is intended to provide an employer with an assurance that an individual will be able to work successfully, albeit with some supervision in the role of a Business Analyst/Solution Development position.