

BCS Higher Education Qualification

Diploma

April 2023

EXAMINERS' REPORT

Professional Issues in IS Practice (PRISS)

General comments

Several candidates are referring to the 1998 Data Protection Act. That was updated in 2018 when the EU's GDPR was introduced and again a few years later when Brexit took place and the UK moved to use the UK GDPR. We have allowed a transition stage for candidates to familiarise themselves with the new terminology in GDPR and the 2018 Data Protection Act. Candidates should focus on the latest versions of the data protection legislation, rather than the much older 1998 legislation. Candidates can find a discussion of the updated legislation in the 3rd edition of the course text book (Professional Issues in IT, BCS publishing), which was released in September 2022.

A few candidates have received very low marks for all questions that they have attempted. These candidates required better preparation before sitting this exam. It is important that candidates take time to study the course content. Previous exam papers are available. Training providers are available in various countries, who can provide the structured learning environment to help candidates succeed.

Questions Report:

A1	
	<p>This was a popular question with candidates. It asked about the education aspect for BCS and the BCS Code of Conduct. Most candidates offered reasonable responses to part a), commenting on issues such as HEQ qualifications, accreditations of degrees and vocational qualifications. Some answers spoke about the BCS in general, and did not focus their answer on the issue of BCS and education.</p> <p>Part b) was answered less well, where students struggled to discuss the issue of 'duty to the profession' in the BCS Code of Conduct. There were some answers that just talked about the Code in general and then made brief mention of the section asked about in the question. Candidates are encouraged to focus their answers on what has been asked so that they have the space and time to demonstrate their understanding. Some answers would have been improved with examples.</p>
A2	
	<p>This question asked about companies with a limited liability and partnerships, as different business structures. The answers for part a) were generally good, with candidates discussing how profit and loss is handled within a limited liability company. Some answers focused on share value. Better answers demonstrated a knowledge of how a company might use the profit or handle the loss, noting the significance of the company as a distinct legal entity.</p> <p>There were mixed answers for part b), which talked about partnerships. Some candidates did not attempt this part of the question. There were several good answers that understood the issue of liability for those in a partnership and the</p>

	<p>difference for a limited liability company. There was less certainty in the answers about what problems may arise if a person wanted to leave a partnership.</p>
A3	
	<p>This question asked about Management by Objectives and the use of job rotation, job enlargement and job enrichment. There were good discussions of Management by Objectives and how it could be used within organisations. Some answers, however, were general and talked about project management, rather than how MBO is used to set goals for individuals.</p> <p>There was generally a good appreciation of the key ideas for job rotation, job enlargement and job enrichment. More detail could have been added with examples for some candidates. There was some confusion between job enlargement (more tasks at the same level of responsibility) and job enrichment (developing extra responsibilities). Some students couldn't explain the job enrichment with good depth.</p>
B4	
	<p>This question was about finance. Part a) asked for explanations of some terms. Part b) asked about the use of depreciation techniques with straight line depreciation and declining balance approaches.</p> <p>Part a) was answered well, with many candidates about to explain each term. Several answers could have been improved with some more detail in the explanations and with appropriate examples.</p> <p>For part b), most of the candidates showed awareness of the straight-line method. However, the declining balance method was not widely understood by candidates. Limited calculations were shown by some candidates which limited total marks awarded.</p>
B5	
	<p>This question asked about the Freedom of Information legislation and UK data protection legislation.</p> <p>Candidates generally showed a basic level of familiarity with the Freedom of Information topic. Additional details would have enhanced many answers. Other answers would be improved by linking the discussion to the topic set in the question.</p> <p>For part b), several candidates listed data protection legislation points without putting these into the context of a discussion surrounding the scenario presented in the question. Many answers still focused on the older 1998 legislation; see the general note about this at the start of this report.</p>
B6	
	<p>This question asked about UK equality legislation and the issue of intellectual property rights legislation.</p> <p>For part a), many answers were able to identify some issues about adapting the website so that it addresses issues of inequality – e.g. talking about accessibility on the website. Some answers talked generally about the need to support people with disabilities, but then did not explore what that meant regarding the website.</p>

It is noted that some answers talked about “people with disabilities and normal people.” It is not inclusive to suggest that people with disabilities are not normal people. It would be good for candidates to think about the choice of words when talking about users of IT systems.

For part b), there was general understanding that copyright is useful for a software system – although many did not state clearly that this applies by default when someone (or a company) creates software. There was good awareness of trademarks, but often the discussion was limited. Some candidates explained what a patent was, but they did not consider whether it would be relevant for this situation. In the UK, a patent of a software system is less likely to be granted. If there was a hardware element, that may help a patent application. Other countries, such as the USA, take a different approach to patents and may grant one for a software system.

Several candidates listed the purpose of each type of IPR protection without putting this into the context of the scenario described in the question which limited marks awarded.