THE BCS PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION
Professional Graduate Diploma

EXAMINERS' REPORT
Professional Projects
December 2016

Statistics

- Approximately 100 project proposals were received and processed, nearly all for projects at the PGD level.
- In this cycle, 99 projects were submitted for assessment, of which only four were at the Diploma level.
- Following moderation, results were as follows. (Last cycle's figures are in parentheses.)

	Fail	Pass	Credit	Distinction
PGD	38(30)	43(45)	14(4)	0(0)
Diploma	2(3)	2(1)	0(0)	0(0)

Comments on Project Proposals

Comments made on previous occasions apply to the current cycle, and are repeated for completeness. Candidates and Centres are urged to read these comments to improve their submission.

- "Again, most proposals successfully describe the scope and level of the intended work, allowing the examiners to be confident that the proposal provides the basis of an acceptable project submission. Nearly all proposals are for software development, with a small number for design projects or networking projects.
- "Many centres appear to continue advising candidates to use a standard template for the contents of their project proposal, <u>whether or not</u> it is fully relevant to their specific project. This gives little confidence to the examiners that the candidate has thought carefully about their proposal. Candidates and their authenticators should consult published guidelines for the required contents of a proposal.
- "Good proposals have described
  - **briefly**, the objectives of the system
  - the different classes of users of the system
  - what the system allows each class of user to do
  - how the system will be shown to be fit for its intended purposes (tested)
  - **briefly**, the hardware/software/environment of the system
  - **briefly**, the timescale for the project work.
- "The recommended word count (of approximately 500 words) has been significantly exceeded in some proposals, and is poor practice. Much irrelevant detail is sometimes included at the expense of the required information. Where an existing system is to be replaced, this has sometimes been described in <u>too great detail</u>, not leaving the candidate sufficient opportunity to describe the above points in appropriate detail. **At the proposal stage, examiners do not require large amounts of background information.**
- "Where the proposed authenticator has not been a BCS member, a CV has been submitted. **Examiners are looking for about five years' experience in a managerial or supervisory role**, not just technical expertise, and not all CVs have included details of this experience. To obtain relevant advice and avoid wasted work, candidates should choose their authenticator carefully and ask them to provide details of their managerial/supervisory experience."
- Candidates should note that the only acceptable file formats are Word and PDF, and that we expect word processed documents where we can access the text, and not image scans.

Comments on Projects Submitted

Again, comments made on previous occasions apply to the current cycle, and are repeated for completeness. Candidates and Centres are urged to read these comments to improve their submission.

- "Many centres appear to continue advising candidates to use a standard template for the contents of their project report, <u>whether or not</u> it is fully relevant to their specific project. This gives little confidence to the examiners that the candidate has thought carefully about their report. Candidates and their authenticators should consult published guidelines for the required contents of a report.
- "Despite ticking all the boxes in the checklist relating to obligatory content, some candidates have submitted projects with missing sections. **These projects have automatically failed**. The inclusion of page number references to these sections has also sometimes been omitted, which is poor practice.
- "Many reports still contain too much generic material about, for example, design methods or approaches to testing. Including passages of standard bookwork about design notation or testing methods attracts very few, if any, marks. Instead, **candidates should ensure that the contents of the report are specific to their project**.
- "The use of relevant screen shots to illustrate sections of the report is to be encouraged. However, it is common for screen shots to be illegible because of poor resolution or insufficient size. Illegible screen shots are poor practice and cannot be marked.
- "Many project reports significantly exceed the recommended word length. This is usually caused by the inclusion of too much generic material or too many diagrams/tables located in-line instead of in appendices, or too much background material to the problem being solved. Inevitably it demonstrates poor practice in report writing and should be avoided.
- "Candidates are reminded that **reports must include evidence that the project <u>actually satisfies</u> its specification**. For example, a project which updates a database should include evidence of contents before and after an update.
- "Some projects have included test data which demonstrated that the project was not meeting its specifications, without showing how these results have been used to discover errors which were subsequently corrected. While inclusion of such data and results is fully acceptable, the subsequent error-correction process should also be shown, and the final acceptable results included.
- "After obtaining approval for the proposal, it is acceptable for candidates to make minor changes to a project specification without obtaining further approval from BCS Examiners. For instance, it would be possible to change the technology on which a website is hosted as long as the reasons for the change are explained in the project report.
- "The inclusion of correct references and proper citations is professionally important. **Where material from other sources is included, it must be attributed to its originator.** All referenced items from elsewhere (e.g. the Internet) should be cited in the text, as well as referenced, as this is the professional approach to be recommended. This includes diagrams, graphs, and screenshots including images**.** Examiners are very experienced at recognising plagiarism."