

BCS Higher Education Qualification

Diploma

November 2020

EXAMINERS' REPORT

Professional Issues in Information Systems Practice

General comments

The candidates did well overall, with an overall improvement in the quality of answers. Candidates showed a better understanding of the issues in Part A. There were shorter and more incomplete answers provided for Part B, showing a limited understanding of finance and legal issues; these issues are asked about on each paper and will appear in future papers.

We encourage candidates to read the questions carefully and target their answers at the issues requested. Some answers did not address the issues that were set in the question. Instead, candidates wrote more generally about the topic or included extra sections on what they did know in the hope that it might be awarded a higher grade, regardless of addressing the question correctly. We do not wish to stop the best answers which are able to expand the discussion once they have covered the essential issues. However, it is important that candidates cover the issues asked about first.

With those who failed, there are recurring problems similar to those of previous papers. Answers were not structured in accordance with the question; the students just wrote a selection of paragraphs with no clear separation of the different sections. This approach made the answers difficult to mark and award grades.

There are previous example papers available that should help with preparation.

We encourage candidates to study all areas of the syllabus so that they are in a good position to answer the questions.

Question number: A1

Syllabus area: Professional Codes of Conduct, 8.1

Total marks allocated: 25

Examiners' Guidance Notes

This question was about the BCS Code of Conduct, asking about the general areas and then asking for a specific discussion about the Public Interest section.

Most candidates provided a good or very good answer for part a, which asked about the areas of the Code of Conduct.

Whilst there were some excellent answers for part b, many were not as good as those for part a. In many cases, candidates wrote more for part b than they did for part a, despite part b being worth a lot more points. For part b, some candidates started to list a general description of the purpose of the BCS and its mission, including issues about producing a magazine for members. These answers did not address the question, which was about the Public Interest section of the Code of Conduct.

Some candidates did not always include an appropriate number of required examples for their answers as in part b, or did not always distinguish between the examples or give relevant numbering and in some cases did not identify the correct number of examples at all. This makes the answers more challenging to mark in accordance with the marking criteria.

Question number: A2

Syllabus area: Human Resources Issues, 9.1 and 9.7

Total marks allocated: 25

Examiners' Guidance Notes

This question was about Human Resources issues. The first part asked about reasons for justifying dismissal of an employee. The second part asked about the responsibilities for an HR department so that the organisation has the relevant workforce that it needs.

The answers were of a mixed standard with a number of participant's only providing answers for one of the sections. For part a, many candidates could identify at least two reasons for dismissal, including lack of capability, misconduct, breach of the law and redundancy. Some candidates talked more about unfair dismissal, which wasn't the focus of this question. Part b was answered reasonably well overall.

As with question 1, the candidates did not always address the questions adequately; in 2a and 2b, in some cases they tended to give more than the required number of examples.

Question number: A3

Syllabus area: Organisations and their structure, 2.1

Total marks allocated: 25

Examiners' Guidance Notes

This question asked about the Partnership Act and the issue of liability and the issue of outsourcing IT provision.

There were a number of reasonable answers for part a, with discussion of issues of liability for a partnership. Some answers would have been enhanced with more detail and an example of where the liability might affect one person in the partnership more than the other person.

The answers for part b were also OK, although some of the candidates did not give the relevant number of arguments for part b. Typical benefits listed included (i) making the costs more visible and, therefore, easier to control and (ii) a specialist company should be able to produce and operate a more effective system. Few commented that outsourcing could allow the company's management to focus on the core business and spend less time managing the IT facilities.

Question number: B4

Syllabus area: Finance, 3.1

Total marks allocated: 25

Examiners' Guidance Notes

The first part of this question presented a scenario and asked candidates to apply two different types of depreciation to equipment owned by a company over 5 years. The second part of this question asked for definitions of investments, tangible assets and intangible assets.

Whilst there were some good answers, there were many answers where candidates did not appear to understand the necessary concepts. For the first part, a calculation of depreciation using the straight-line method and the reducing balance method was requested as well as a statement about the impact on the accounts when the equipment was sold. A number of candidates were unable to demonstrate a correct calculation for one or both of these methods.

Answers to the second part were mixed. The better answers could describe the three categories of Fixed Assets, but there were a number who could only make brief statements about each category. Some of those statements also showed a lack of understanding of the difference between tangible and intangible fixed assets.

Question number: B5

Syllabus area: The Internet, 7.1 and 7.2

Total marks allocated: 25

Examiners' Guidance Notes

The first part of this question asked about defamation legislation as applied to social media. The second part asked about UK consumer protection legislation as applied to an e-commerce company selling books.

Part a) was generally answered rather poorly, with some candidates showing a limited awareness of UK defamation legislation and how it would apply to social media. Whilst there were some very good answers, other candidates could only make brief statements about what defamation was and were unable to say more and did not say much about the issue of social media.

Part b) was answered reasonably well, with candidates showing an awareness of UK Consumer protection legislation. Some candidates confused the consumer protection legislation with the data protection legislation.

Question number: B6

Syllabus area: Intellectual Property, 6.1 and Legal Obligations, 5.1

Total marks allocated: 25

Examiners' Guidance Notes

The first part of this question asked about the issue of patents for a company that had a novel invention. The second part of the question asked about the UK Computer Misuse legislation.

Part a) was generally answered reasonably well, with candidates showing an awareness of the benefits of UK patent legislation.

Part b) was answered reasonably well, with candidates showing an awareness of some of the UK Computer Misuse legislation.

As with B5, some candidates were confused and talked about the UK's Data Protection legislation rather than the Computer Misuse legislation. A number of answers were brief and only covered one or two of the relevant issues.