BCS Higher Education Qualification

Profession Graduate Diploma

October 2021

EXAMINERS' REPORT

Management Information Systems

General comments

- In order to provide appropriate responses, Candidates should ensure that they have read the questions carefully. Candidates need to ensure that they read the questions carefully before attempting to answer so that provide appropriate responses to the question set. Candidates need to ensure that they are familiar with all the topics within the curriculum, so that they can offer suitable and relevant answers to each question.
- If a question explicitly asks for supporting examples, then it is extremely likely that marks have been set aside for these: a candidate that provides no (relevant) examples, therefore immediately reduces the possible maximum mark that they can obtain for that question.
- Keeping up with contemporary developments and implementations of MIS in corporate settings, through extensive reading in books and journals, and through real-world experiences, is not only good professional practice, but also excellent preparation for this examination.

Questions Report:

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A1	**General Comment** This was a fairly popular question. Unfortunately, candidates appeared to struggle with it. Several candidates failed to understand the key focus and requirements of each part of the question. Also, many candidates described more than one benefit and more than one challenge, and by doing so offered little depth in the content covered on any one benefit/challenge (thus reducing the potential to gain high marks). Several candidates did provide examples in an attempt to support their identified benefits/challenges. However, some examples were largely irrelevant to the part of the question being answered. Finally, some parts of the question were not attempted and gained zero marks.
a)	This part required candidates to describe a key benefit and a key challenge around near-real time BI systems. Many were able to define a BI system as an MIS that collates and analyses data from several sources to provide information to support management decision making, but did not pick up on the fact that the answer needs to focus on **near real-time** BI system, i.e., BI systems that work on data that is sourced and analysed in as real-time a manner as possible. Although not appreciating the real-time requirements, a lot of answers did manage to highlight the significant costs involved as a key issue.
b)	This part required candidates to describe a key benefit and a key challenge around a data warehouse employing a data mart bus architecture. Like Part a) many were able to define a data warehouse and even a data mart (as a subset of a data warehouse for functional/subject-focussed use) but did not pick up on the fact that the answer needs to specifically focus on data warehouses that employ a data mart bus architecture. As

	such, the benefits and challenges presented by most candidates were general ones. However, very few candidates mentioned the specific benefit of cross-mart querying via a data mart bus architecture (due to conformance) and the specific problems to maintain conformance as new data marts are added to the bus architecture.
c)	This part required candidates to describe a key benefit and a key challenge around the development of a DSS that simulates a company's production process. Like the previous parts, answers tended to focus on general benefits and challenges of a in general, rather than focussing specifically on DSS that offer a simulation model of the production process which can then be used to examine different scenarios. As such, the potential to gain good marks was reduced because of this.
d)	This part, in most cases, brought out the best of all the part answers from candidates, as many were able to explain outsourcing in general, as well as outsourcing specifically in relation to a DSS development project.
A2	**General Comment** Candidates appeared to struggle with this question. Candidates possessed some reasonable factual knowledge of On-line Analytical Processing (OLAP) with its drill down, roll up, slice and dice and pivot operations on data organised in a multi-dimensional (aka. cube) form. However, many struggled with the other aspects of the question, either providing irrelevant answers or not attempting elements.
a)	Part a), required a description of the most well-known decision-making model within the MIS literature; Simon (1977)'s three phase decision making model. Sadly, very few candidates knew what the Intelligence and Design terms mean within the context of this model, suggesting Intelligence to incorrectly be about 'being intelligent', and Design incorrectly being about the design of some computerised system after a decision is made. Most candidates, however, did manage to reflect an accurate view of the Choice phase.
b)	Part b) required candidates to outline the key features of an OLAP tool and then evaluate the extent to which it could be used to support Simon (1977)'s decision making model (and the three phases therein). Examples based on sales and marketing activities/functions were expected to support answers to this part. As stated above, most candidates were able to define a set of relevant OLAP features, as well as tool features. Diagrams were often used to good effect to illustrate the OLAP operations on sales and marketing data cubes. On the other hand, many of the candidates' struggled with evaluations of the support for Simon's decision-making model. Several candidates did not offer any evaluation. The best answers discussed the extent of support that could be provided for each of the three phases in turn (and with useful examples based on Sales & Marketing to support arguments made), which led to an overall position being stated.
A3	**General Comment** This was a very popular question among candidates, but many did appear to struggle with it. Several candidates failed to understand the key requirements of each section of the question, and this meant that explanations and supporting examples were not always suitable. Finally, some candidates chose not to answer specific parts of the question, which therefore gained zero marks.
a)	Answers to this part were generally sound overall. The question required candidates to explain how user views of the resultant MIS and what it will provide, can influence the success of a project. Candidates focussed on a variety of aspects relating to user views. However, not all explicitly linked their discussion on user views to project success.

b)	Candidates seemed to struggle with this question, with many failing to correctly read the question. Good answers explained how the support of top management can help an MIS project. Unfortunately, a sizeable number of candidates focused incorrectly on top management's **use** of an MIS and essentially repeated elements of their Part a) answers.
c)	Answers to this part were reasonable overall, as many candidates were able to discuss some key attributes of a good MIS development project manager. Like Part a), not all candidates were able to follow the discussion through to the impact on project success criteria.
d)	Most candidates recognised the importance of IT infrastructure to an MIS, and that its comprehensive evaluation is required at the outset of an MIS project. Some candidates incorrectly gave answers that related to company infrastructure in general (covering aspects such as physical office space and staff resources), rather than focusing their answers on IT-related infrastructure matters.
B4	**General comment** This question was not popular with candidates, and was only attempted by a minority of those sitting the examination. There were a range of different qualities of answer. There were some excellent answers, but a large number of candidates appeared to struggle, with a few not providing adequate answers.
a)	Section a) of this question required the candidate to provide and account for five factors which should be considered in the selection process. A number of candidates failed to deliver this number. In other cases, candidates failed to provide sufficient justification for their recommendations.
b)	Section b) asked candidates to provide an appropriate selection process. This involved both the definition of the process and its justification – taking into account the answers provided in section a). Where candidates struggled was generally due to a lack of supporting information, or a failure to include appropriate references to the previous section of the question.
B5	This question was designed to allow candidates to freely express their understanding of three key areas which impact on MIS and its environment. The comments apply to all three sections. This was a popular question, and was attempted by the great majority of candidates. While some good, and a few very good, answers were achieved by candidates, there were a significant number of inadequate responses which were inappropriately brief or lacked the appropriate depth for an examination at this level. Candidates are recommended to ensure that when they address broad ranging questions such as this, they provide material of sufficient depth and relevance. This can be aided by ensuring that they read widely and take a positive interest in the introduction of new technologies in the MIS community.