# BCS Higher Education Qualification

## Professional Graduate Diploma

## October 2025

## EXAMINERS' REPORT

## Management Information Systems

**General Comments:**

In general, candidate responses demonstrated subject knowledge appropriate to the specification and the majority of candidates were prepared for the rigour of the examination.

A significant proportion of candidates lost marks for failing to respond in context, particularly in scenario-based questions where theoretical knowledge needed to be applied to specific business situations. However, it was refreshing to see good answers being provided for the question on corporate strategic planning frameworks, with candidates demonstrating solid understanding of SWOT analysis, the Balanced Scorecard, and Porter's Five Forces. Unfortunately, the integration between corporate strategic planning and IS strategic planning as a topic is still proving difficult for many, with Question A3 attracting the fewest attempts and achieving the lowest average mark.

**Questions Report:**

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| A1 | 25 candidates attempted this question with an average mark of 68%.<br><br>Part a) asked candidates to identify two key activities in corporate strategic planning. Most candidates successfully identified activities such as environmental scanning, objective setting, strategy formulation, or resource allocation. Stronger responses provided clear explanations of why these activities are critical to the planning process. Some candidates lost marks by providing vague or overlapping activities without sufficient distinction.<br><br>Part b) required candidates to distinguish between top-down and bottom-up approaches to strategic planning. Well-prepared candidates clearly articulated that top-down approaches involve senior management setting direction which cascades through the organisation, while bottom-up approaches gather input from operational levels. Common weaknesses included confusing these approaches with hierarchical structures rather than planning methodologies.<br><br>Part c) was worth 8 marks and asked candidates to apply SWOT analysis to a technology company scenario. Excellent responses demonstrated understanding of all four SWOT elements with relevant, specific examples appropriate to the technology sector. Many candidates provided generic |

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| | SWOT factors rather than contextualising them to a technology organisation. Candidates should ensure they address all four components equally and provide concrete examples rather than abstract statements.<br><br>Part d) focused on the Balanced Scorecard framework. Successful candidates explained the four perspectives (financial, customer, internal processes, learning and growth) and how they provide a holistic view of organisational performance. Weaker responses either confused the Balanced Scorecard with other frameworks or failed to explain how the perspectives interconnect to support strategic objectives.<br><br>Part e) required explanation of Porter's Five Forces model. Most candidates could name the five forces but varied in their ability to explain how each force affects competitive positioning. Better responses included practical examples demonstrating how organisations might respond to each competitive force. |
| A2 | 55 candidates attempted this question with an average mark of 60%.<br><br>This was the most popular question in Section A, testing candidates' knowledge of management reporting systems, decision support systems, and OLAP technologies.<br><br>Part a) asked for three examples of management reporting systems with explanations. Strong candidates provided specific system types such as sales reporting systems, financial reporting systems, or inventory management systems, with clear descriptions of their purpose and typical outputs. Weaker responses provided generic descriptions without specific examples or confused management reporting systems with transaction processing systems.<br><br>Part b) required candidates to explain the differences between Decision Support Systems (DSS) and Group Decision Support Systems (GDSS). Well-prepared candidates identified that DSS supports individual decision-makers while GDSS facilitates collaborative decision-making among groups, often incorporating features such as electronic brainstorming, voting mechanisms, and anonymous input. Many candidates provided superficial comparisons without exploring the collaborative and facilitation aspects of GDSS.<br><br>Part c) tested understanding of OLAP (Online Analytical Processing). Successful responses defined OLAP as a technology enabling multidimensional analysis of business data, allowing users to interactively analyse data from multiple perspectives. Some candidates confused OLAP with OLTP (Online Transaction Processing) or provided incomplete definitions.<br><br>Part d) asked for three OLAP examples with explanations. Strong responses included operations such as drill-down, roll-up, slice, dice, and pivot, with clear explanations of how each operation manipulates the data |

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| | cube. Candidates who provided practical business scenarios demonstrating these operations scored highest marks. |
| A3 | 18 candidates attempted this question with an average mark of 52%.<br><br>This was the least attempted question in Section A and produced the most varied responses. The question examined the relationship between corporate strategic planning and IS strategic planning, and the role of MIS in supporting strategic decision-making.<br><br>Part a) asked candidates to explain the interrelation between corporate strategic planning and IS strategic planning. Strong responses demonstrated understanding that IS strategy should align with and support corporate strategy, with IS capabilities enabling competitive advantage. Many candidates described the two planning processes separately without adequately explaining their integration and mutual dependency. Candidates should emphasise the bidirectional relationship where IS both supports and enables corporate strategy.<br><br>Part b) required candidates to explain how SWOT analysis and Critical Success Factors (CSF) techniques can be used to develop MIS proposals. Better responses showed how SWOT identifies internal and external factors affecting IS initiatives, while CSF analysis ensures MIS investments address the most critical business requirements. Weaker responses treated SWOT and CSF as separate, unconnected techniques rather than complementary approaches to IS proposal development.<br><br>Part c) examined the role of MIS in decision-making for strategic planning. Excellent responses discussed how MIS provides timely, accurate information to support strategic decisions, enables scenario analysis, facilitates environmental scanning, and supports performance monitoring. Common weaknesses included focusing solely on operational rather than strategic decision support, or providing generic descriptions of MIS benefits without linking them specifically to strategic planning processes |
| B4 | 46 candidates attempted this question with an average mark of 55%.<br><br>Part a) A reasonable attempt to explain what a feasibility study is.<br><br>Part b) Most candidates failed to address the question, which was to discuss the differences between the approaches to development of systems.<br><br>The majority of answers contained 2 (or 3) notes on hard methods followed by notes on agile or a similar method.<br><br>Most answers just obtained a pass for this approach and not highlighting the differences.<br><br>Part c) 18 of those candidates that attempted this question did not attempt this section, and of the 28 who did, a number appeared to be guessing at what SQIRO was. |

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| | Those that did understand SQIRO made a very good attempt at explaining what the technique is and were scoring 4 or 5 out of 6.<br><br>Part d) Average attempts with many candidates ignoring the supporting MIS development section. |
| B5 | 49 candidates attempted this question with an average mark of 41%.<br><br>Part a) Most recent developments over the past 20 years is perhaps how some candidates read the question.<br><br>Lots of answers focused on the home market and not business. AI seemed to be ignored by some, quantum computing was not mentioned, data centres and data mining were ignored by most.<br><br>In general, answers could have been much stronger.<br><br>Part b) A significant number of answers mapped the work mobile to mobile phones, and ignored laptops etc.<br><br>Again, a significant portion of the answers focused on home computing rather than IT infrastructure that supports business.<br><br>The low mark reflects an over-emphasis on mobile phone functionality and personal use, rather than MIS.<br><br>Part c) Similar comments to Part b), the focus was on personal social media rather than how a business can use social media to enhance its operation.<br><br>The low marks reflect the statement above. |