FORMATION 2 – INFORMATION SYSTEMS

EDUCATORS BRIEFING 2019/20

	Topic	Guidelines
1.	**Comments on Performance in 2019 Examinations**	The gap between April and August pass rates continued to narrow this year (55% in August compared to 57% in April), with improved August performance compared to previous years.
		The average marks for the papers were and 49% in August. However, this hides a wide distribution of marks. In April, the distribution showed 21% of students below 40, and around a third above 60 – with some excellent papers at the upper boundary. In August 26% of students were below 40, 21% above 60.
		Comments on April paper:
		Question 1 Some better responses to the case study question than in recent papers, often bolstered by good marks in part a. Some students failed to give specific improvements in part b and forfeited substantial marks, some gave less than 4 suggestions.
		Question 3 Mid-range average score of 48%. Mixed responses to part a, I was surprised how many students confused the types of cloud computing, and private v public cloud.
		Question 4 Mid-range average score of 50%. As in 3, a number of students focussed too heavily on describing SCM in part a, and did not engage with internet technologies or global issues. Part b was well answered, part c was surprising poorly answered, with students seeming to lack detail.
		Question 5 The lowest scoring question at 46% average score. Past questions on this topic have been similarly poorly answered. Most students did well in part a, but in part b very few were able to discuss DSS in the context of a broader business intelligence environment. Understanding of knowledge management (part c) was either very good or very weak.
		Question 6 This was the highest scoring question at 56% but also the least popular question. Students tended to do well in parts a and d, those who struggled did so on parts (b – DBMS) and (c – data warehouse and Hadoop). With that said, answers were notably better than previous questions on this topic.

Comments on August paper:

Question 1
A much higher average than recent case studies with an average score of 60%. A very accessible case with regularly asked material. Parts c and d were weak for some students, with a lot of discussion of advertising on Facebook for social CRM and legal aspects rather than ethical. These are part of the story but only part, as commented previously.

Question 3
Mid-range average score of 51%. Mixed responses to part a, I was surprised how many students gave software trends, some gave huge amounts of detail here and should consider time management, others provided too little. Part b was generally very well answered. The least popular question on the paper.

Question 4
Mid-range (failing) average score of 47%. Part b, asking students to engage with organisational/management/ technological factors was weakest, despite previous questions and clear reference to core syllabus material.

Question 5
Mid-range average score of 51%. Some students struggled with the idea of value chain in part b, with many failing to show knowledge/failing to link this to an online retailer, but were often 'rescued' by good answers to part c.

Question 6
The lowest scoring question with an average of 43%. Past questions on this topic have been similarly poorly answered. A lack of technical knowledge and detail in this very important area was in evidence for many students.

General comments:
As in previous years, students who failed generally did so because they did not demonstrate technical knowledge of the paper's content, or demonstrated a very basic level of knowledge that did not allow them to respond to given contexts, or to discuss that content in an appropriate level of detail. Some recent examples are listed above.

There continues to be scope for improvement in student responses to the (compulsory) case study questions, albeit that engagement with the August paper was better than recent attempts. In case study questions, students should expect to draw on the material provided in the case to respond to the questions posed – this application is central to the aims of this subject. If they fail to do so and give answers that re-state technical content without applying it, they will not achieve good marks in these questions. Similarly very general answers that fail to demonstrate any subject-specific knowledge also score low marks. I have written an article on case study questions in hope this will be helpful to students preparing for these.

Similar comments can be made in respect of the optional questions where students are asked to relate technical content to a specific scenario – such questions reinforce the need for students to be comfortable in *applying* technical knowledge: generic answers based on learned off descriptions or lists (e.g. of pros and cons) will not demonstrate this.

		Examination technique continues to improve with the vast majority attempting all relevant parts of each question. I would continue to encourage students to consider exam technique and timing, to avoid overly long responses for few marks, or overly brief responses for many marks
2.	**Learning Objectives**	The aim of this subject is for students to develop an understanding of the role and application of information systems and information technology in the management and control of organisations. Students will develop their understanding of selecting and advising on the implementation of appropriate systems, processes, controls and solutions in organisations today.The Learning Outcomes are published in the syllabus.
3.	**Syllabus Changes**	**The syllabus remains the same as for the previous year**, and the emphasis remains on the application of information systems and information technology. This emphasis enables educators and students to concentrate on how systems and technologies support organisational activities, performance and growth. The recommended core text is: **Laudon and Laudon, Management Information Systems - Global edition, Publ. Prentice Hall 2015 / ISBN 978-1292094007 15th edition.**
4.	**Format of the Examination Papers for 2020**	**The overall format of the examination will be the same as in recent years.** The examination will be unseen, closed book and three hours in duration. It will be divided into two sections: • **Section A** will consist of two compulsory questions. Question 1 is a compulsory question. It will be based on an unseen case study set in a real life business context, and will be worth 25 marks. This will primarily assess students' ability to apply their knowledge of the **core** areas identified in the Education Focus below. However, it will also expect students to draw on knowledge of the **important** areas also identified in the Education Focus. Question 2 is also compulsory. It will be a 15 mark question, with students expected to write notes on 3 from 5 questions with 5 marks each. As in previous years, Question 2 facilitates the examination of a range of topics across different syllabus areas. The topics will be drawn from the **core** and **important** areas identified in the Education Focus, and will assess students' knowledge of the topic and ability to apply that topic to the specific context. • **Section B** will have four 20 mark questions. Students will be required to answer 3 of these. Each of the questions in Section B will have, as its major element, one of the **core** areas identified in the Education Focus. Approximately one third of the marks will be allocated to topics in the **important** areas as well as other parts of the syllabus. The examination format and an indication of the marks allocation are also stated in the syllabus. The format will be the same as outlined in the

		'Assessment Strategy' section of the syllabus.
5.	**Education Focus for 2019/20**	Educators are expected to cover all aspects of the syllabus so that students get a full understanding of selecting and advising on the implementation of appropriate systems, processes, controls and solutions in a business environment. In order to facilitate educators and students, a number of **core** and **important** areas have been identified, **and these are the same as in previous years.** Together these provide a structure that enables educators to achieve the learning outcomes presented in the 2019/20 syllabus.

Core

1. The role of information systems in today's competitive business environment, and in particular the links between information systems and business performance. This includes the strategic business objectives of information systems, and the organisational, management and technological dimensions of systems deployed in today's business environment.

2. Enterprise applications and systems, and in particular information systems used for enterprise resource planning (ERP), supply chain management (SCM) and client/customer relationship management (CRM), plus the management challenges to building and using these.

3. The use of information systems in decision making and decision support, including business intelligence tools and analytics. In this context it is important to understand data and information storage, with emphasis on current trends, warehousing and mining, and the management of data and information resources.

4. Understanding contemporary information technology trends and their implications for (business) organisations. These trends include Internet technologies that facilitate the management of business processes, the use of mobile platforms and applications in business, cloud computing and social media.

Important

1. E-business and collaboration, including global e-business and a knowledge of the tools/technologies used. This covers the business objectives, applications, business models and technologies of e-commerce, as well as the ways in which the Internet impacts organisations and business firms, both economically and organisationally.

2. Using information systems to achieve competitive advantage, including the use of Porter's Five Forces and Value Chain models.

3. Ethical and social issues in information systems, including the Data Protection Act.

4. Securing information systems, and in particular frameworks for security and control. The latter covers all aspects of the systems and technology infrastructure (hardware, software, data, people and processes), as well |

		as all application stages (input, storage, processing and output).
		5. Managing knowledge. Here the emphasis is on knowledge management and the different types of knowledge management systems rather than intelligent techniques or the specifics of different knowledge work systems.
		6. Building and deploying information systems. This covers the planning of organisational change, stages in system development, and approaches to system building or acquisition.
		7. Establishing the value of information systems in business, and knowing how to manage information systems projects.
		8. eXtensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL) as a standard for exchanging business information, and its role in communicating financial information among internal and external users.
		Educators are encouraged, where possible, to actively engage students through the use of discussion questions, case studies and short group activities in order to address the learning outcomes of critical analysis of case studies.