

Examiners' Report June 2010

Principal Learning

Information Technology IT307 Making Projects Successful

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Contents

1.	Level 3 Unit 7 Report	1
2.	Statistics	5

Principal Examiner's Report

Principal Learning - Information Technology

Level 3 Unit 7- Making Projects Successful

General Comments

This was the third exam series for this examined unit. The pre-release was issued 6 weeks before the exam, providing background information that related to Section A (Oaking College) and Section B (Scottish Water's 'Promise to resolution' project).

Most learners attempted all the questions, with only a few learners omitting a question or substantial section of a question. The quality of answers varied between learners and it was noted that Section B of the question paper was not answered as well as it had been in previous sessions. Most learners seemed slightly better prepared for Section A of the paper, however it was apparent that some learners:

- were ill prepared and were only able to answer questions with broad statements or generalisations
- had not covered all of the areas in the 'What you need to cover' (WYNTOC) section of the specification

The intention of the pre-release is to familiarise learners with the case studies that are used in the exam and it is expected that learners would refer back to the case study information during the exam when forming their answers. It appears that more learners have made better use of the case study information in Section A than in the previous session.

Section B questions were not so well answered this session and it was disappointing to see that many learners did not access the higher marks available. Centres need to make sure that learners are fully familiar with all of the learning outcomes, as questions can cover any part of the specification. Learners also need to be encouraged to read the question thoroughly to ensure that they are providing the correct answer to the question.

Section A

Question 1

This question related to the projects constraints, resource requirements and definition of scope. Most learners were able to identify two constraints for questions 1a. Most learners identified the resource requirements for question 1b, achieving a minimum of two marks, but many learners did not provide enough expansion relating to the case study to achieve the full four marks. Similarly for question 1c, learners either provided one reason with an expansion or stated two reasons, as to why it is important to produce a definition of scope, and therefore only achieved two of the four marks available.

Question 2

Question 2a asked learners to describe how the project manager will ensure effective communication throughout the project. Few learners achieved full marks for this question. Most learners provided a communication method, eg, email, regular meetings, reports, but failed to identify with whom the project manager would be communicating. Most learners used the generic term staff, rather than the relevant stakeholders, suppliers, etc. Question 2b asked learners to describe two processes that will enable the project manager to identify timescales. Most learners identified Gantt chart and some PERT analysis. Few achieved full marks as many learners suggested that a Gantt chart and PERT analysis were the same.

Question 3

Question 3a asked learners to identify two categories of risk associated with the project. Few learners achieved marks for this question. Most learners did not appear to understand the term 'category' and were unable to provide a relevant example. Most learners who did attempt this question provided an example in a category, e.g. technician may be electrocuted when installing equipment, rather than identifying the category Health & Safety. The response to Question 3b was varied. Many learners made the mistake of talking about solutions and ways of avoiding the risks rather than discussing the next stage in the risk assessment process (assessing the likelihood of the risk occurring or what the impact would be). Where the question was appropriately answered, learners tended to only identify the stages and not expand upon their answers for the second mark.

Question 4

Question 4a asked learners to describe one of the consequences of Risk ID 14. Those learners who achieved marks for this question identified a delay to the project. A large number of learners misunderstood the context of security believing it to be security of the computers against theft and viruses, rather than securing the computer stock from the supplier. Question 4b asked learners to explain why Risk ID 16 would have a low impact on the project. Most learners gave responses that did not include information from the pre-release material or the strategy that had been put in place eg, few learners mentioned the pre-installation meeting with technicians, or that extra hardware had been purchased. Instead learners suggested problems with computers are usually easily fixed or that the college could buy extra hardware. Question 4c asked the learners to identify one other risk that could affect the project. Unfortunately there were a high number of learners who did not relate the risk identified to the project case study and therefore were awarded no marks. There were many vague answers such as "staff illness" instead of the IT technicians may become ill.

Question 5

Many learners failed to achieve marks for Question 5a as they were unaware of the differences between a Gantt chart and a Pert chart and simply stated that the PERT analysis would tell them what needs to be done and how long it will take. All of this information can be found in the Gantt chart rather than in the PERT analysis. If learners mentioned timings they often didn't mention detailed timings such as EST, LST, EFT or LFT. Few learners discussed the critical path or float / slack time. Question 5b was generally well answered. Where learners provided incorrect answers it tended to be an error in translating the information from the Gantt chart provided

in the pre release material. It was apparent that some learners had not covered this part of the WYNToc however they still attempted to complete some sections of the diagram and achieved some marks.

Question 6

Question 6a asked learners to identify three possible implications to the equipment order as a result of Central Computers' cash flow problems. Few learners fully understood what the question was asking. Most learners failed to identify the possible implications Central Computers cash flow problems would have on the Oaking College project.

Most learners provided general answers to Question 6b focussing on the knock on effect to other tasks in the project and the overall completion of the project. Higher marks were achieved where learners took a more holistic approach and went into more detail about subsequent tasks and the issues surrounding a late completion date, eg the college not opening on time, cancellation of classes, poor publicity etc. Very few learners provided a well thought out response that clearly demonstrated a good understanding.

Question 7

Most learners provided answers addressing the formalisation of project success, project performance and lessons learnt with very few addressing residual issues or arrangements for a Post Implementation Review. A high number of learners failed to achieve the second mark for each item identified as there was limited expansion provided within their answers.

Section B

Centres are reminded that this section is worth 30% of the marks and learners should be given ample opportunity to interpret the case study in relation to the specification.

Question 8

Question 8a asked the learners to identify three specific stakeholders for the project. Many learners had evidently studied this part of the case study carefully and achieved the full 3 marks. Question 8b was about the decision to use 'off-the-shelf' software in the project. This question was attempted by a majority of the learners and usually well structured. Most learners achieved marks within MB2 of the mark scheme, addressing some of the key points and demonstrating an understanding of the decision to use off-the-shelf software. Some learners did not refer to the case study and provided generic descriptions of off-the-shelf software and its benefits, which limited their answers to 1 or 2 marks.

Question 9

Question 9 focused on the different stages of the project and associated tasks. Many learners missed the point of this question and not all of the learners demonstrated an understanding of the project stages with most missing many of them out of their answer. In particular many missed out testing and some missed out the redesign of the service delivery. There were a very small number of learners who discussed the college project here instead of Scottish Water. Some learners provided only a general answer without referring to the case study, seriously limiting the marks

available to them. Learners should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the cases studies provided in the pre release materials and then use the marks shown in brackets to identify how comprehensive their answers should be to enable them to access the full mark range.

Question 10

Question 10 was about the key factors that led to the success of the project, for example, clear understanding of client's requirements and deliverables; submitting a realistic bid at the outset; keeping within budget; appropriate resources (human, money, materials); delivering within time frame. A lot of the responses to this question missed the point with some learners producing outlined descriptions that lacked clarity and demonstrated limited understanding. Some learners provided detailed descriptions of some of the factors that led to the success of the project but most did not use a structured and holistic approach. This restricted marks to level one or the lower end of level two of the mark scheme. Again, some learners failed to make reference to the case study at all and therefore only achieved one or two marks for this question. As mentioned previously, learners should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the cases studies provided in the pre-release materials and then use the marks shown in brackets to identify how comprehensive their answers should be to enable them to access the full mark range.

2. STATISTICS

Level 3 Unit 7 - Making Projects Successful

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	90	72	64	56	48	41	34
Points score	21	18	15	12	9	6	3

Notes

Maximum Mark (raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the Mark Scheme or Marking Grids.

Raw boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a learner to qualify for a given grade.

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