

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

Level 3 Principal Learning
Information Technology
Unit 7 (IT307) Making Projects Successful

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Publications Code DP032540

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General Comments

This was the seventh series for this examined unit. The pre-release was issued six weeks before the exam, providing background information that related to Section A (Mitchell Facilities Limited) and Section B (NYC 3-1-1 Citizen Service Center).

Most learners attempted all questions in Section A and B, with only a few learners omitting a question or substantial section of a question. The quality of answers varied between learners and marks were achieved across the full range of the mark scheme.

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 will refer back to the case study information during the exam when forming their answers. It is important that learners are encouraged to become familiar with both case studies in the run up to the exam.

Centres need to continue 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 focused on the deliverables and benefits of the project, along with a stakeholder's interest in the project.

Most learners were able to identify two or three of the project deliverables for question 1(a). A few learners appeared confused as to what the deliverables were and instead discussed the company role. Most learners were able to describe two benefits of the project (question 1(b)) and achieved between three or four marks. Most learners were able to identify or explain why Tyler Smith Systems had an interest in the project for question 1(c).

Question 2

This question related to the planning stage of the project and asked learners to describe three tasks that the project manager would carry out to ensure that the project completes within budget.

Most learners managed to achieve two or three marks out of the available six, mainly focusing on allocating costs to tasks or resources. Learners could also have discussed agreeing contingency funds, gaining stakeholder agreement to the plan, agreeing availability / release of funds or obtaining realistic bids or quotes.

Question 3

Question 3 related to project planning.

Question 3(a) focused on the features of project management software that enable the project manager to create an effective plan.

This question was generally well answered with learners achieving the full range of marks available. Answers focused on the different views and reports that could be used and some learners went on to discuss creating a baseline, defining the project, creating milestones and summary headings.

A few learners misread the question and discussed how the project management software could be used to track the project i.e. updating task progress.

It was pleasing to see that learners were able to achieve the full range of marks for question 3(b). Many learners were able to identify the task information shown in a node of a PERT chart and achieved between four and seven marks.

Question 3(c) was not so well answered and learners' answers explaining why a PERT chart is an effective tool for the project manager to use apart were weak. Those learners who did achieve marks based their answers around the critical path and slack time. Learners could have also mentioned how the PERT chart identifies the total length of time for the project and how it can be used to identify date flexibility for non-critical tasks.

Question 4

Question 4 was based around a risk analysis.

Most learners were unable to describe the likely loss from a risk occurring for question 4(a).

Learners achieved between one or two marks for question 4(b), explaining why a risk would have a low impact.

Most learners were able to identify at least one method of mitigating risks once they have been identified.

Learners should be encouraged to spend more time learning how to review and interpret losses and impacts of project risks.

Question 5

Question 5 focused on the use of a cause and effect chart. It was disappointing to see that many learners did not know what a cause and effect chart is.

Few learners managed to identify two suitable categories of a cause and effect chart for question 5(a).

Those learners who explained the process used to create a cause and effect chart correctly, for question 5(b), generally achieved between three and six marks. Learners who were unsure often described the risk management process and did not achieve any marks.

Question 6

Question 6 focused on external factors and time delays.

Question 6(a) asked learners to discuss how the project manager could manage a serious time delay and there was a wide range of answers. Most learners focused on employing more staff without mention of the cost and using the contingency fund. A few learners discussed how you could allocate resources from a noncritical task and change the task start date to the latest start time. Some learners incorrectly stated that tasks with slack time could be left out of the project all together or that the project manager should just extend the end date of the project.

Question 6(b) asked learners to identify two external factors that could affect the projects costs and was generally well answered.

Question 7

Learners were asked to describe activities carried out during the close down stage of the project and was generally well answered. Most learners identified that it is the 'handover' stage, that an end of project review takes place to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the project and there is a celebration of project completion. Some learners also discussed other areas of the close down stage such documenting the project, paying stakeholders, identifying residual issues etc.

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 8(a) asked the learners to identify three objectives of the 'NYC 3-1-1 Citizen Service Center' project. The majority of learners answered this question correctly and were awarded full marks.

Question 8(b) asked how the management team achieved an effective procurement process. This question was well answered with most learners achieving five or six marks.

Question 9

Learners were asked to discuss the strategies used to manage the risks associated with the project. This question was generally well answered with most learners accessing marks in the mid-range of the mark band. Learners should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the cases studies provided in the pre release material and then use the marks shown in brackets in the question paper, to identify how comprehensive their answers should be. This will enable learners to access the full mark range.

Question 10

This question asked learners to discuss the benefits realised for the city of New York and its citizens. Most learners discussions focused on customer satisfaction but learners who accessed the higher marks also discussed streamlining processes and improved services. Once again, learners should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the cases studies provided in the pre release materials and then use the marks shown in the question paper, to identify how comprehensive their answers should be. This will enable learners to access the full mark range.

Centres should be advised that the next examination window for this unit will be June 2013.

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