

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

Principal Learning (IT307) Paper 01
Making Projects Successful

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Publications Code DP036263

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General Comments

This was the eighth series for this examined unit. The pre-release material was issued six weeks before the exam, providing background information that related to Section A (FunkiPad Ltd) and Section B (The United States Department of Defence "Identity Management Programme").

The quality of answers varied between learners and marks were achieved across the full range of the mark scheme. It was pleasing to see that the majority of learners attempted all of the questions in Section A and Section B.

Section A

Question 1

This question focused on the definition of scope for the project. Most learners were able to identify two objectives of the project (question 1 a) but a small number of learners incorrectly identified the aim of the project. A significant number of learners were unable to explain why YGH Supplies and Finance Bank UK had an interest in the project and simply identified why each company was a stakeholders (question 1b).

Question 1c asked learners to describe two items of information that would be included in the definition of scope (other than project objectives and stakeholder details). This question was generally well answered by most learners. Where a learner did not achieve marks they had incorrectly discussed the project objectives and stakeholder details.

Question 2

This question related to the planning stage of the project. Question 2a asked learners to describe three tasks that the PM will complete during planning. This was well answered with learners achieving the full range of marks available.

Most learners were able to achieve 2 marks for identifying two other stages of the project (question 2b) but some learners lost one or two marks by not using the correct terminology for identifying project stages e.g. start up, execution, design, testing, close down, handover.

Question 3

This question asked learners to describe the contents of a communication plan. Several learners lost marks as they did not actually answer the question and instead focused on why it was important to communicate effectively. Where learners did provide the correct responses, marks were generally restricted to the lower mark band as answers were unstructured and only identified one of two areas of the plan.

Question 4

Question 4 focused on project planning techniques. Learners could often identify what a summary heading or milestone was but were unable to explain how they were used in a project plan (Question 4a)

In Question 4b, most learners were able to describe three items of information that could be recorded against a task and the full range of marks was accessed by the learners.

Question 5

Question 5 focused on industry standard approaches used to interpret and develop project plans. Most learners correctly identified two items of task information needed to create a PERT chart (Question 5a).

Question 5b was less successfully answered as learners were unable to explain how the project manager would calculate slack time or float, the latest start time or the earliest finish time.

Question 5c asked learners to explain how the critical path analysis would help the project manager to manage the project. Most learners only achieved marks in the lower mark range for this answer, as even though they were able to explain that the task on the critical path had to be completed on time to prevent a delay to the project, they often stated that tasks that were not on the critical path could be left out of the project completely.

Question 6

Question 6 focused on Risk assessment. Question 6a was generally well answered with most learners achieving between two and four marks for explaining two approaches to ranking risks. Question 6b was also well answered and the majority of learners received between one and two marks for identifying methods used to mitigate risks.

Question 7

This question related to changing circumstances and the affect that the late delivery of PCs would have on the project plan. Learners lost marks by stating straight away that the project would be delayed. If they had interpreted the plan correctly, they would have realised the task affected by the delay had slack time. Tasks could have been rescheduled accordingly to allow for the late delivery of PCs, allowing the project to still complete on time.

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. It was pleasing to see that learners were well prepared for this section of the paper.

Question 8

Question 8a asked the learners to identify suppliers responsible for different services. This question was well answered with most learners achieving full marks.

Question 8b asked learners to describe three aims of the project. Once again question 8b was also well answered with most learners achieving between four and six marks.

Question 9

Learners were asked to explain how the department tested and evolved the identity card technology. This question was well answered and learners generally achieved marks from the mid to higher mark range. Learners should continue to be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the cases study provided and then use the total mark (shown in brackets in the question paper) to identify how comprehensive their answers should be. This will enable learners to access the full mark ranges.

Question 10

Learners were asked to discuss the benefits realised by the Common access Card Programme. Once again, this question was well answered and learners generally achieved marks from the mid to higher mark ranges.

Conclusion

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 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 also fully familiar with all of the learning outcomes for this unit, 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 asked.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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