

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS IN MALAWI

JUNE 2016 EXAMINATIONS

ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN PROGRAMME

PAPER TC4: INFORMATION SYSTEMS

EXAMINER'S REPORT

GENERAL COMMENTS

The examination paper was of the same standard as in previous sittings and had seven questions, each question carried twenty marks. Candidates were required to answer any five.

Overall, the standard of the candidates' work was poor. Consequently, few candidates passed the examination. There was continued evidence of poor understanding of the examination questions and lack of knowledge of the subject matter. A majority of candidates failed to manage their time properly as some answers were incomplete. There were also a lot of cancellations, a sign of trial and error. Some candidates appeared not to understand the questions properly and gave answers that were completely unrelated to the questions. Also a majority of the candidates continue to rely on memorization of the past papers, hence, a slight change in the question format throws them off balance. The candidates' poor language fluency also affects their performance as their answers were incoherent, vague and difficult to understand. In some instances, they gave one-word answers without elaboration e.g. fast, cheap, simple ...etc. The candidates expected the marker to complete the answers for them. They lost marks, as a result.

COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

The question asked the candidates to define the term "bluetooth" and to mention the devices that use it. It was a popular question, probably because it is on the technology that the candidates use widely nowadays. Most candidates who attempted this question obtained good marks.

Among the candidates that got this question wrong, a majority of them mixed up bluetooth with wireless network. Due to this mix up, the answers that they gave were not in line with the Bluetooth technology, hence, the wrong answers.

Another group of candidates kept on referring to the term "Bluetooth" as an application or a software program, which is wrong, therefore, their responses were incorrect.

QUESTION 2

This was one of the popular questions. It was on computerized information systems. It asked the candidates to define computerized information systems. Most candidates who attempted this question, answered very well.

In part (b), some candidates gave reasons for companies using computers in processing their data against manual processing, however they did not say why companies use computerized information systems therefore, such candidates ended up giving wrong answers.

In part (d), some candidates stated the benefits that can be realized by businesses when using off-the-shelf software. However, the question asked was that they state the benefits that can be realized by businesses when they use custom computer software.

QUESTION 3

This was the most popular question that required the candidates to define the terms with reference to a generic system diagram. Most candidates who attempted this question did very well. However, there were isolated cases where candidates explained the terms "Input" and "Output" as the actual processes and not as raw materials and finished products of a process, respectively.

There were other candidates who described the terms "Input" and "Output" as the actual devices that are used for inputting data and getting output from a process, respectively.

QUESTION 4

This was another popular question that asked the candidates to describe an analog and digital computer and their characteristics. Most candidates who attempted this question answered well. However, some

candidates swapped the characteristics of an analog computer with those of a digital computer.

QUESTION 5

This question was avoided by many candidates. The few candidates that attempted this question did not do well.

In part (a), the question asked candidates to define the term “extranet, however, candidates defined the terms ‘internet’, ‘intranet’ instead, and others said it is a corporate password.

In part (b), some candidates gave reasons why organizations use both LAN and WAN networks, despite the question asking them to state the reasons why organizations use extranets.

Part (c) was on firewalls. Some candidates who attempted this question addressed a firewall as a piece of software only; others addressed it as some hardware component only; whilst others gave ant-virus as a type of firewall. Some candidates even described a firewall as a physical structure made out of brick and mortar. Another group of candidates answered as if the question was asking about preventative measures that need to be taken against an outbreak of fire.

QUESTION 6

In part (a), some candidates defined the term “end user computing” as merely the usage of computers by end users without mentioning the aspect of developing their own application for use in their work.

In part (b), a majority of the candidates that attempted this question wrote about ‘computer bureau,’ while the question asked about an ‘information centre’.

QUESTION 7

This was another unpopular question. It was on network, but the candidates failed to define it.

In part (b), instead of describing what a client server network stands for, some candidates defined a Wide Area Network.

In parts (c) and (d), some candidates gave the advantages and disadvantages of using the internet, whereas the questions asked the

candidates to give the advantages and disadvantages of using peer to peer and client server networks.

CONCLUSION

The following are the areas that need to be concentrated on, regarding candidates' performance:

- (a) Failure to follow instructions
There were several cases where candidates failed to follow the instructions. A good example of this is when some candidates did not begin each question answer on a fresh page.
- (b) Question forming part of the answer
Some candidates copied the entire question first before starting to answer it. This is time-wasting on their part, since it is not necessary.
- (c) Encourage use of bullets where necessary
Many questions required the candidates to either list or mention or describe the advantages/factors/impacts etc. For such questions, it is recommended that candidates provide their answers in bullet/point form, as opposed to outlining everything in a paragraph format.
- (d) Lack of understanding/knowledge of the subject matter
As highlighted earlier in this report, some candidates displayed lack of understanding or knowledge of the subject matter at hand. For instance, candidates gave wrong answers to items such as custom computer software, firewall, end-user computing. This was a clear testimony of knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.
- (e) Usage of improper words
It was noted that some candidates used improper words. In as much as the markers do not dwell so much on the language used, candidates are encouraged to use correct spellings and tenses. Some candidates used short-codes, commonly referred to as "sms or facebook language". For instance writing "2" to mean "to", "2" to mean "too", "b4" to mean "before" which is wrong.

