A guide for candidates

Preparation for assessments

Diploma in procurement and supply
Advanced diploma in procurement and supply
Professional diploma in procurement and supply
Preparing for assessments

Improving your technique could be the difference between a pass and a fail, so it’s important to spend some time thinking about what you should be doing correctly.

CIPS has produced two new guides to assist you in preparing for each of the assessment formats you are likely to encounter when taking CIPS qualifications. Hints and techniques for each format are covered in each guide, and you should use the relevant guide for the qualification or unit you are about to take. Everyone works in different ways, so these guides can only offer you some helpful advice – it is not intended that everyone should follow the advice, or prepare for their assessments in the same way.

Whatever the assessment format, the purpose of the questions is for you to: demonstrate your knowledge and understanding about the subject area and show that you can adhere to instructions when answering questions.

CIPS 2013 suite of professional qualifications provides a ladder of learning opportunities to suit all the different stages of a procurement career. Our qualifications are available worldwide, and are mapped against qualification frameworks around the world to ensure that they are recognised wherever you are based.

Five qualifications are available, unit titles are shown opposite:

Unit content guides, giving further detail of the learning outcomes for each unit, can be found on CIPS’ website.

ASSESSMENT GUIDE 1
Preparation for assessments:
Certificate in procurement and supply operations
Advanced certificate in procurement and supply operations
Section 1 – Answering multiple choice questions
Section 2 – Practical written assessment preparation guide.

ASSESSMENT GUIDE 2
Preparation for assessments:
Diploma in procurement and supply operations
Advanced diploma in procurement and supply operations
Section 1 – Preparing for essay questions
Section 2 – A guide to preparing for unseen case study and questions
Section 3 – A guide to preparing for pre-released case study and questions.

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General advice for all assessment types

Whatever the format, the purpose of the questions is for you to:

A demonstrate your knowledge and understanding about the subject area, and
B show that you can adhere to instructions when answering questions

It is important to consider both these aspects when preparing for and during assessments. If you are taking an assessment involving essays or case studies, always remember to demonstrate, what you know throughout your answers. The person marking your essay does not know you, so you need to show your knowledge in a similar way to approaching a job interview – you have to

1. Make your own notes, rather than relying on books, or notes provided by lecturers. You may like to summarise your notes on cards that you can carry round with you. If you are a ‘visua®’ person, make mind-maps instead of linear notes. Use highlighters and coloured pens to focus on important things.
2. Use your mobile phone or an online voice recorder (there are lots of free voice recorders online) to record your voice. Record yourself reading your notes or summaries and then listen to the recordings.
3. Use past papers and/or exemplar material provided by CIPS.
4. Make charts, mind-maps, tables or pictures while revising – you may find you can recall these better during the assessment.
5. Read any assessor reports and guidance provided by CIPS.
6. Get as much practice as you can: make sure you can concentrate for 2-3 hours at a time, try to get used to writing in time-constrained conditions, and practise extended writing if you are preparing for essay-type assessment.
7. Revise with a friend. Explain things to each other and ask each other some questions. Go for a walk with a friend and test each other while you are walking.
8. Take regular breaks, perhaps of around ten minutes, to avoid revision-fatigue. Start by revising for short periods between breaks, then gradually lengthen the revision time, but keep the break-times the same. Make extra time for revision during the day by getting up earlier, or shortening your lunch break.
9. Make sure you understand the concepts you are learning – if you don’t understand them, you will not remember them.
10. If you have to remember lists, repeat the items enough times to lodge them in your memory.

You can devise a simple mnemonic to help you remember their names using their initial letters:

- Mullins
- Brech
- Armstrong
- Fayol
- Mintzberg
- Drucker

You can devise a simple mnemonic to help you remember their names using their initial letters:

- Most
- British
- Accountants
- Find
- Maths
- Difficult

If you devise your own mnemonics, they are usually easier to remember than someone else’s. If you can make them funny or personal to you, they are easier still to remember.

Visual memory often helps to support recall of information for an assessment. If this works for you

- use coloured highlighters in your revision notes, choosing different colours for different topics or related concepts. If a question on one of these topics comes up in the assessment, you may be able to recall relevant information by remembering the items that you had highlighted in the same colour.

Research shows that re-creating the circumstances you were in when you were revising helps you to recall better in the assessment. Clearly, you can’t take your classroom or bedroom into the assessment room, but one tip you might try is to wear a particular perfume or aftershave whilst revising. Wear it again on the day of the assessment, and the smell may help you to recall the information you need.

Plan a timetable for revision and break up each area into manageable chunks

Stick pieces of paper around your room with notes and look at them regularly.

Revising for CIPS assessments

Tip and hints

- Use the unit content learning outcomes as a check-list of all the things you need to know.
- Make your own notes, rather than relying on books, or notes provided by lecturers. You may like to summarise your notes on cards that you can carry round with you. If you are a ‘visua®’ person, make mind-maps instead of linear notes. Use highlighters and coloured pens to focus on important things.
- Use your mobile phone or an online voice recorder (there are lots of free voice recorders online) to record your voice. Record yourself reading your notes or summaries and then listen to the recordings.
- Use past papers and/or exemplar material from CIPS website to gain an understanding of how the assessors design questions on the topics you have studied, but remember that the assessment formats changed in 2013, so you should treat pre-2013 past papers with caution. Exemplar material for each unit of the 2013 qualifications can also be found on CIPS website.
- Read any assessor reports and guidance provided by CIPS.
- Get as much practice as you can: make sure you can concentrate for 2-3 hours at a time, try to get used to writing in time-constrained conditions, and practise extended writing if you are preparing for essay-type assessment.
- Revise with a friend. Explain things to each other and ask each other some questions. Go for a walk with a friend and test each other while you are walking.
- Take regular breaks, perhaps of around ten minutes, to avoid revision-fatigue. Start by revising for short periods between breaks, then gradually lengthen the revision time, but keep the break-times the same. Make extra time for revision during the day by getting up earlier, or shortening your lunch break.
- Focus on what you are learning or revising, and don’t let your mind wander. Many people find that certain types of music (often instrumental music) help concentration, but most people cannot concentrate properly with the TV playing.
- Make sure you understand the concepts you are learning – if you don’t understand them, you will not remember them.
- Re-phrase or re-state the information, so that you are forced to think about what it means.
- If you have to remember lists, repeat the items enough times to lodge them in your memory.

On the day of the assessment:

- Eat properly before the assessment to keep your blood sugar and energy levels up. Make sure you drink plenty of water to keep you hydrated.
- Try to remain relaxed. Take deep breaths and, if possible, try to stretch. This can help clear your mind and relieve any build-up of tension.
- If you have a sudden “mental block” during the assessment, try not to panic - this is quite a common problem! If it happens to you, some of the following techniques may help:
  - Leave space and move to the next question. This will give you confidence and give you time to clear your head.
  - Answer questions you feel confident about first – just remember to clearly show the question numbers.
  - Try to recall the information using one of the memory aids above. If you have used these methods during revision. You can make notes in your answer booklet once the assessment has started. Jot down thoughts as they occur to you when you read through the paper, to see if this triggers recall.
  - Pace yourself – make sure you know how much time to allocate to each question or section (we have given you some recommended timings at the end of each section of this guide) and stick to your plan.

Memory aids for revision, and to improve recall during the assessment:

1. Many people claim to have a ‘bad memory’, but often the problem is that they don’t give the information sufficient attention to commit it to their memory in the first place. If the information never made it to your memory, then you have no hope of getting it out again. So the most important aid to memory is to PAY ATTENTION:
   - focus on what you are learning or revising, and don’t let your mind wander. Many people find that certain types of music (often instrumental music) help concentration, but most people cannot concentrate properly with the TV playing.
   - make sure you understand the concepts you are learning – if you don’t understand them, you will not remember them.
   - re-phrase or re-state the information, so that you are forced to think about what it means.
   - If you have to remember lists, repeat the items enough times to lodge them in your memory.
2. Use a mnemonic to help you remember lists, theories, or staged processes.
   - For example, recognised management theorists include: Mullins, Brech, Armstrong, Fayol, Mintzberg, Drucker
3. Visual memory often helps to support recall of information for an assessment. If this works for you:
   - use coloured highlighters in your revision notes, choosing different colours for different topics or related concepts. If a question on one of these topics comes up in the assessment, you may be able to recall relevant information by remembering the items that you had highlighted in the same colour.
4. Research shows that re-creating the circumstances you were in when you were revising helps you to recall better in the assessment. Clearly, you can’t take your classroom or bedroom into the assessment room, but one tip you might try is to wear a particular perfume or aftershave whilst revising. Wear it again on the day of the assessment, and the smell may help you to recall the information you need.

Be prepared. If you feel confident and know what to expect it can have a really positive effect on your state of mind and level of nerves.
## Essay assessments

### What to expect

The following units are covered later in this guide: D3: Sourcing in procurement and supply, AD1: Management in procurement and supply, AD2: Managing risk in supply chains, AD3: Improving competitiveness of supply chains, PD1: Leadership in procurement & supply and PD3: Strategic management in procurement and supply, AD2: Managing risk in supply chains, AD3: Improving competitiveness of supply chains, PD2: Corporate and business strategy, PD3: Supply chain and sustainability, PD4: Supply chain and operations management, PD5: Programme and project management, PD6: Legal aspects in procurement and supply (UK).

### Essay-style questions

#### Preparation guide

**Timing is everything**
- Spend 5 minutes reading the instructions and questions through at least twice – it is worth reading all the questions on the paper so that you have an overall picture of what is being asked, before you focus attention on each of the questions some of which may have several parts. This is so that you can make sure that you have established the focus of each question, and avoid straying into material that you might need to use in other questions. Some questions may contain a brief scenario or a contextual statement, probably only two or three lines long. This is not a case study, which would be considerably longer.
- You will need to decide how to allocate your time when your allocated time runs out! If you do not move on to the next question, you are likely to run out of time and fail to gain marks overall. If you are struggling with completing your first and second essays in the time you have allocated, then you will need to review your plans for the other questions, in order to make sure you complete as many answers to questions as possible.

**Reading the questions and planning your answers**
- As you read through the paper, identify what is being asked of you in each question. Remember, there will be one question for each of the learning outcomes from the Unit Content Guide:
  - Determine which part of the subject unit content the question relates to
  - Consider what key issues the question is asking you to write about, so that you are sure you fully understand the demands of the question. Format, context, task and outputs are very important
  - Check the number of marks allocated to each question or part of a question: this helps you to work out how much information the assessors are expecting you to include in your answer to each part
- Take careful note if the question asks you to provide a specific number of examples or ideas – make sure you provide the number required.

**Example**

Discuss FOUR advantages and FOUR disadvantages of a win-lose approach to negotiation. (16 marks).

Make sure you give four of each, no less. Two marks are allocated for each one, so you cannot earn marks if you do not provide the required number, no matter how detailed your discussion may be of the advantages/disadvantages you include.

**Example**

Explain, with examples, the difference between direct and indirect costs. (10 marks)

If you do not give examples to illustrate your explanation, you will fail to gain marks. In the example given here, failure to include any examples would cost you 50% of the marks available.

**Example**

Explain, with examples, the difference between direct and indirect costs. (10 marks)

If you do not give examples to illustrate your explanation, you will fail to gain marks. In the example given here, failure to include any examples would cost you 50% of the marks available.

**Example**

Explain, with examples, the difference between direct and indirect costs. (10 marks)

If you do not give examples to illustrate your explanation, you will fail to gain marks. In the example given here, failure to include any examples would cost you 50% of the marks available.

**Example**

Next, highlight the command words in each question or part of a question. (See General advice for preparing for any assessment for examples of command words, and what they mean):
- Make sure you understand exactly what you are being asked to do: ‘Explain’ means you must not just describe something. ‘Compare and contrast’ means you should look for points of similarity and difference in the items given – it is all too easy to forget this once you start writing.

**Example**

Explain, with examples, the difference between direct and indirect costs. (10 marks)

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Writing your answers

- Remember to write down a few notes about the question so that you can refer back to these when you begin to write your answer. Use your answer booklet to do this – notes should be crossed out towards the end of the assessment; your assessor will not mark these.
- It is obviously easier to write answers to the parts of questions which are worth relatively few marks. For longer answers however, it is worthwhile taking time to plan your answer in order to organise your thoughts.
- Plan by noting down any and all relevant points that come to mind. At this stage, do not worry about order or structure.
- Once you have some notes, you can then begin to organise your thoughts.
- Identify which points can be drawn together for say, a paragraph of your answer.
- Identify any models, theories or examples which will add value to your answer if appropriate.
- Write your essay to the plan you have made, making each substantive point clear and concise, and written in a way that answers the question.
- You may wish to use sub-headings and/or underlining of key points in your text, to emphasise points in your answer.
- It is good practice where possible to introduce your essay with reference to theories, models, or to a particular business context. This helps to show the assessor what you know about the concepts being assessed, but you should try to keep this brief as it may not add to your marks if you spend too long ‘setting the scene’. If referencing authors in your answer, reference them properly. It may be better to discuss their views in broad terms, rather than attempt to quote them if you aren’t sure.
- Always say why you have referred to a particular theory or model – it should add value to your answer not just fill up space because you can’t think what else to put.

Questions involving comparison or evaluation may require a summary paragraph in which you pull together the points you have been making and draw conclusions at the end. You should make a note, before you begin to write, what conclusions you intend to draw and work towards them as you present your arguments.

General advice for candidates

- Start each answer on a new page, leaving space after completing the previous essay. This enables you to include a few words more, on review of your answer, should another aspect of the points you have made come to mind. Leaving space also makes it easier for the assessor to clearly see the points you have made, when allocating marks.
- Make your handwriting as legible as possible (practice beforehand if necessary). In an age where increasingly we use computers and mobile devices, this is very important. Using a fountain pen or a fibre tip pen can help. Assessors can only mark what they can read and interpret fully, so if they can’t read your writing you may not gain the marks you deserve.
- Use time at the end to review your answers. Do not amend your answers substantively at this stage, it is too late for that, but if you have had to leave an essay unfinished, there may be time to go back to it at the end.
- Check your answer against the question, and the plan you made, so that you are sure all relevant points have been included, written correctly and the question has been answered appropriately.
- Poor planning can lead to a well-written first half of an essay, but lack of focus and often some repetition in the second half. Try to make sure that your planning leads to a complete and balanced answer.
- Always remember to demonstrate, throughout your answers, what you know. The person marking your essay does not know you, so you need to show your knowledge in a similar way to approaching a job interview – you have to help them to recognise that you know your material, and if you don’t, the assessor will not make any allowances for what you missed out.

Example

Discuss the benefits and challenges associated with the implementation of an MRP system. (10 marks)

You may wish to preface your answer with a short paragraph showing your understanding of MRP systems, before going on to discuss their benefits and limitations. Ensure your answer discusses both benefits and challenges. If you do not address one of these within your answer, it will mean you fail to gain up to 5 marks.

Recommended time to spend on essay papers (three hours duration)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading all questions through twice</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading each question and planning your answer (per question)</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (per question)</td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking/amending (per question)</td>
<td>2.5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking that you have correctly followed the instructions, missed nothing out, labelled everything, last-minute amendments (per assessment)</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unseen case studies

CIPS assessments use case studies in two ways:
• Unseen case study (this section)
• Pre-released case study (see Section 3).

In unseen case studies, the material is presented for the first time in an assessment environment, and there is no opportunity for specific research or reading beforehand, other than normal preparation for an assessment. These case studies normally take the form of a business scenario (around 500 words) followed by related questions, testing your knowledge and understanding of the topic area, and often also your ability to apply your knowledge and understanding to the business environment.

Responding to case study questions is an active process, not a memory exercise, and needs practice prior to the assessment.

You need to learn analysis and problem-solving skills that you can use quickly and easily as you aim to analyse ‘unseen’ case study material. On analysing a case study you may need to make some assumptions, and you will need a good knowledge of current procurement and supply practices and general business climate developments, although you will not need to have any specific industry or sector knowledge in order to answer the questions.

All our case studies are designed to test your knowledge and understanding of the unit content, and your ability to apply your knowledge to, for example, an industry sector, an organisation, a role within an organisation, a relationship between a number of organisations, a process, a principle or product context. Other information will be about the substantive key issues related to the unit content.

It is important to remember that the case study material will contain information that you will need to use in answering the related questions, and your answers will need to be applied to the case study context if you are to maximise your chances to gain marks.

A case study is a brief overview of a business situation. The purpose of the case study is to allow you to demonstrate your ability to analyse and comment on a procurement and supply situation under assessment conditions. To do this effectively you need to know, understand and have experience of the application of the relevant theory.

Good answers will be well reasoned and justified with appropriate theories, models or examples.

In the Diploma in procurement and supply, case study questions and tasks tend to focus on testing understanding such as asking why things are typically done. So for example you may be asked to explain issues or suggest reasons for something, in order to demonstrate your understanding.

In the Advanced Diploma in procurement and supply, questions and tasks will focus on testing a greater depth of knowledge and understanding such as positioning questions from a management perspective. So for example questions may invite you to analyse issues and explain how something might be managed, in order to demonstrate the scope of your knowledge.

In the Professional Diploma in procurement and supply, questions and tasks will focus on testing a higher level of knowledge and understanding such as positioning questions from a senior or strategic management perspective. So for example questions may require you to evaluate situations, or make an assessment, from a strategic point of view. These questions may have more than one ‘correct’ answer, and often the way in which you reach your conclusion, and support and justify it, will earn you the marks. You will need to explore the issues raised by the question, and present well-reasoned or justified arguments supported with appropriate theories, models or examples. You should be able to judge the appropriateness of any theories or models that you use, and recognise their limitations.
Unseen case studies with questions

Can you suggest any hints and tips for the assessment?

- Read the case study and the case questions through quickly to start with in order to get a general overview of what it is about, and to help you settle down to thinking. Then, read the case study through again more carefully, this time with a pen at the ready to make a few notes and annotate the case study throughout. But be careful - when you begin writing your answers you are likely to want to go back to the case to re-read portions of it, so if you are making notes on the case itself, take care to keep the pages as clean as possible. It is beneficial to write any notes in your answer booklet (you can cross them out at the end). That way, if you run out of time, the assessor can read your notes which may give him or her an insight to your analysis.

- Next, identify the contextual information, such as the background data that sets the scene for the key issues. For example, if there is financial information, or information on trends, size of the business or procurement spend, then it is useful to highlight these and consider their relevance to the case study. Often these issues are insightful in terms of the approaches you might take to the answer. Possible contexts might include:
  - B2C, and/or
  - B2B, and/or
  - Product, and/or
  - Services, and/or
  - International, and/or
  - Not for profit/social.

- Then identify the key issues that are presented in the case and try to prioritise these, including any that appear to be peripheral to the main case.

Timing is everything

- We recommend you spend 20 minutes on ‘Recommended time to spend on unseen case-study papers
- As you read through the paper, identify what is being asked of you in each question or each part of a question. Remember, there will be one question for each of the learning outcomes in the ‘Unit Content Guide’:
  - Determine which part of the subject unit content the question relates to
  - Consider what elements of the case study are relevant to this topic, and the key issues the question is asking you to write about
  - Check the number of marks allocated to each question or part of a question: this helps you to work out how much information the assessors are expecting you to include in your answer to each part
  - Take careful note if the question asks you to provide a specific number of examples or ideas – make sure you provide the number required.

- Next, highlight the command words in each question or part of a question. (See page 21 for examples of command words and what they mean.)

Recommended time to spend on unseen case study assessments (three hours duration)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Diploma</th>
<th>Advanced &amp; Professional Diploma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading case study material and all questions</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning/making notes for answers (per question)</td>
<td>4 minutes</td>
<td>4 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (per question)</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>33 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking/amending (per question)</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>4 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Pre-released case studies with questions

The case will be 12-15 pages long and based on a realistic organisation and published on the website four weeks in advance of the assessment date. Other information will be about the substantive key issues related to the unit content.

It is important to remember that the case study material will contain information that you will need to use in answering the related questions, and your answers will need to be applied to the case study context if you are to maximise your chances to gain marks.

Can you suggest any hints and tips during the assessment?

- You will be expected to produce much more in-depth answers to questions based on pre-released case study material than will be found in unseen case study assessments. You will be asked for more analysis, as you will have had more time to consider all aspects of the case, and research more theory that will be appropriate for your answers.

- However, being well-prepared for the case study assessment should not tempt you to guess what the questions may be, and come into the assessment room with rehearsed answers. This could easily lead you to answer the questions you hoped would be set, rather than the actual questions on the paper.

- The information given to you in a pre-released case study will be extensive (12-15 pages). It will give you the background to an organisation or situation upon which the assessment questions (unseen) will later be based. Seeing this material before the assessment gives you time to research the organisation or situation, and to analyse relevant issues that emerge from your research. You will need to read through the material several times before you can establish a clear idea of the key issues, and of the environment in which the company is operating.

- Four questions each worth 25 marks, each testing a different learning outcome. Questions should be answered within the context of the case. The pass mark is 50%.

- As above.

- In the assessment, you may be asked to look at any of the following in relation to the pre-released material, so you will need to have prepared appropriately:
  - The key historical events that may have contributed to the development of the company, including:
    - the evolution of the industry in which the company operates
    - historical supply-chain-management decisions made by the company that may have contributed to the current situation
  - A PESTLE analysis, which looks at Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental issues surrounding the case, allowing you to:
    - understand the macro-environment facing the industry sector that the company operates in
    - highlight key trends within the markets (demographic, sociological, different markets, or ethics and sustainability issues)
    - consider technological factors, particularly because of the increasing emphasis on e-based initiatives such as e-procurement and e-tendering
  - A SWOT analysis and its evaluation, including:
    - strengths/weakness in the company’s supply chain or supply management strategies
    - whether/how the company can turn its weaknesses into strengths
    - the company’s overall position in supply markets
    - whether/how the company can minimise the threats to its position and expand on its opportunities to improve its business practices.

- Questions based on these materials will expect you to be able to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of relevant theoretical principles, concepts and techniques; to apply these appropriately to the particular situation described in the case study and above all, to make sound decisions. You will not gain marks by writing a general essay on the topic. Prepared notes may not be included as part of the answer.

- You can make notes on separate paper, and you will be allowed to take these notes into the assessment room with you. Make sure your notes are well-referenced and well-sourced: if not, you are likely to lose time trying to find key aspects of your analysis. You must also take your copy of the case study to the assessment.

- Having read the case study material carefully, identify the contextual information, ie the background data that sets the scene for the key issues. For example, if there is financial information, or information on trends, size of the business or procurement spend, then it is useful to highlight these and consider their relevance to the case study. Often these issues are insightful in terms of the approaches you might take to the answer.

- Possible contexts might include:
  - B2C, and/or
  - B2B, and/or
  - Product, and/or
  - Services, and/or
  - International, and/or
  - Not for profit / social.

- Then identify the key issues that are presented in the case and try to prioritise these, including any that appear to be peripheral to the main case. Check how these relate to the learning outcomes for the unit.
2. Identify the problem(s) around which the case study is written: a situation analysis of the company, its problem areas and its general capacity.

2. Analyse any data provided in the case study: depending on the situation, you may be given data relating to a range of aspects of the business. You need to analyse the data and their relevance to the situation, considering what they tell you about the company's:
- growth potential
- supply markets
- financial performance: profitability, return on investment, shareholder value, liquidity, etc
- organisational structure, values and objectives.

3. Consider future options, and evaluate their costs/benefits to the company.

4. Recommendations you might make.
Be careful not to go into the assessment room with your recommendations already fully worked out – you may be given additional information in the assessment that changes the situation, and the assessors will be looking to see how you absorb new information and make new decisions/recommendations after taking this into account. Any recommendations you make must be justified and justifiable, taking into account the possible reactions of all stakeholders involved in the process. Resource implications also need to be considered.

When analysing the case study, remember that more than one course of action is often possible. There may be several alternative solutions to a problem, and a company has to weigh up the chances of success and pursue a particular course of action. As an assessment candidate, you are expected to pursue courses of action which are possible, realistic and sustainable. Try to determine if you need to make assumptions based on the case study material – if you do, make sure you state in the assessment what you have assumed and why. The assessors are not looking for right or wrong answers, they are searching for solutions that will work within the given scenario of the case study.

In the assessment room:
- You will be allowed to take the following:
  - your copy of the case study
  - your notes made prior
evenings
  - pens, pencils, highlighters*, ruler, calculator
  - relevant text books, but ensure that you mark them up clearly and do not spend too much time referencing them or else you will not finish
  - any useful journals.

* Please note that any information marked with a highlighter pen is lost in the photocopying process that happens during marking. Highlighting should only be used for your own purposes before and during the assessment. You are advised not to use a highlighter, but to underline, anything you wish to emphasise to the assessor.

- However, do use your preparation/analysis to form the basis of your answers, to give you back-up, support your recommendations and justifications, and ensure that it is articulated appropriately.
- As you read through the assessment, identify what is being asked of you in each question, or each part of a question.

Remember, there will be one question for each of the learning outcomes in the Unit Content Guide:
- Determine which part of the subject unit content the question relates to
- Consider what elements of the case study are relevant to this topic, and the key issues the question is asking you to write about

- Check the number of marks allocated to each question or part of a question: this helps you to work out how much information the assessors are expecting you to include in your answer to each part. (See the table ‘Recommended time to spend on recommended time to spend on each part of the assessment)
- Take careful note if the question asks you to provide a specific number of examples or ideas – make sure you provide the number required.
- Next, highlight the command words in each question or part of a question. [See examples of command words, page 21 and what they mean.]
Recommended time to spend on pre-released case-study assessment papers (three hours duration)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning/making notes for answers (per question)</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (per question)</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking/amending (per question)</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking that you have correctly followed the instructions, missed nothing out, labelled everything, last-minute amendments (per assessment)</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Make sure you understand exactly what you are being asked to do: for example ‘Propose’ means put forward (for example, a point of view, idea, argument, suggestion) for consideration or action, and you should write your answer with this in mind, as if you were putting your proposal to a company’s management team. ‘Evaluate’, on the other hand, requires you to calculate or judge the value of something, and include theory and/or your personal opinion in your evaluation.
- If you are asked to give examples, or quote theories or models, make sure that you relate the theory/model to the case study.
- During the assessment, do not duplicate any large pieces of factual information from the case study, just reference it within your answer: for example ‘on page number 6 of the case study, figure one shows financial information...’. This will save you time, which you can spend on your answers.
- Start each answer on a new page, leaving space after completing the previous question. This enables you to include a few words more, on review of your answer, should another aspect of the points you have made come to mind. Leaving space also makes it easier for the assessor to see the points you have made clearly, when allocating marks. Use sections and sub-sections for your answers, to aid the flow from one section of your answer to the next. When using diagrams always label them and reference them, making sure they have a clear purpose.
- Make your handwriting as legible as possible (practice beforehand if necessary). In an age where increasingly we use computers, tablets, and mobile devices, this is very important. Using a fountain pen or even a fibre tip pen can help. Assessors can only mark what they can read and interpret fully, so if they can’t read your writing you may not gain the marks you deserve.
- Remember, the purpose of this case study is to allow you to demonstrate:
  - Analysis and critical thinking
  - Decision-making
  - Judging between courses of action
  - Handling assumptions and inferences
  - Presenting a point of view
  - Listening to and understanding others
  - Relating theory to practice.
  - Use of relevant models for the sector in which the case study is based.

It is important that you seize the opportunity to demonstrate any or all of these throughout your answers. The person marking your case study answers does not know you, so you need to show your knowledge in a similar way to approaching a job interview — you have to help them to recognise that you know your material, and if you don’t, the assessor will not make any allowances for what you missed out!

- Please note that all work should be your own. Copying or plagiarism will not be tolerated and could result in no marks being awarded. If quotes or short extracts are used they should be attributed or the source of the information identified.
Finally, make sure you have read and understood the list of **command words** below. These words will appear in the questions, and they tell you exactly what the assessor wants you to do. Although you do not need to learn the words and their definitions, you should make sure you have read and understood the different requirements of each command word.

### Definitions of Command words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyse</td>
<td>Assess a topic together with thoughts and judgments about it, by dividing the topic into its separate parts and looking at each part in detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraise</td>
<td>Evaluate, judge or assess something, giving views based on strengths and weaknesses of a given situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue</td>
<td>Provide reasons for or against something, clearly and in proper order, using or citing evidence so that a case can be proven. Also, compare with Discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess</td>
<td>Evaluate or judge the importance of something, referring to the special knowledge of experts where possible. This may involve quoting from other texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment on</td>
<td>Write notes explaining your own criticism and observations of the issues. Base your comments on a balance of fact versus personal views. Often involves evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Assess one thing in relation to another thing so that points of similarity or difference become evident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Emphasise the differences between two opposite or dissimilar things. This may include approaches to a particular aspect of procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticise</td>
<td>Give your judgments about the good or bad qualities of theories or opinions, supporting your decision with evidence and where appropriate, literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Explain the exact meaning of a word or phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Give a full account or a detailed representation of something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Consider something by writing about it from different points of view. Compare with Argue or evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enumerate</td>
<td>List and mention items separately in number order. Compare with List, Identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Calculate or judge the value of something; include your personal opinion in your evaluation. Often includes an assessment of strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Give reasons for, or account for something, so that it is clear or easy to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Mention items separately in number order or by using bullet points. Compare with Enumerate, List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrate</td>
<td>Clarify or explain something by using examples or diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret</td>
<td>Use your own ideas to explain the significance of something. This may be qualitative or quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justify</td>
<td>Show good reasons for decisions or conclusions, perhaps by referring to other texts or evidence with a case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List</td>
<td>Mention items separately in number order or by using bullet points. Compare with Enumerate, Identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>Give the main features, facts or the general idea of something, omitting minor details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propose</td>
<td>Put forward (for example, a point of view, idea, argument, suggestion) for consideration or action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconcile</td>
<td>Show how two apparently conflicting things can appear similar or compatible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relate</td>
<td>Establish a connection or association between things to show how they effect each other or how they are alike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Examine and assess a subject critically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show</td>
<td>Explain thoroughly or prove something so that the truth can be established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Put something into words clearly and briefly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggest</td>
<td>This means that there may be more than one answer. You must give the most appropriate answer or answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarise</td>
<td>Give a brief, concise account of the main points of something, leaving out details and examples</td>
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</tbody>
</table>