

## Global Learning Providers' Conference February 2015

### P5 Advanced Performance Management

This document summarises the Question and Answer discussion which took place in the examiner's workshop at the Global Learning Providers' Conference on 11-12 February 2015.

- **Why is the pass mark so low in P5 and is ACCA worried about this?**

*Contrary to the pre-conceptions of many students, P5 is not the easiest of the Professional Options papers as the global pass rates over several sessions has demonstrated. ACCA and the examining team are particularly aware of the relatively low pass rate of P5 in comparison with the other Professional examinations but are hopeful that an increase in the pass rate may be achieved in due course.*

*However, marks cannot be awarded unless the necessary knowledge and application are demonstrated. As with other Professional Level examinations, no more than about 30% of marks can be earned for rote learning or demonstrating knowledge alone. Techniques in answering the actual questions asked, rather than the ones candidates wanted to be asked, need to be improved. Candidates need to demonstrate more logical thinking, more application and focus. For example, in a recent paper, candidates were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of a company's performance report, but many candidates evaluated the performance of the company. This was clearly the wrong approach and no credit could be given. The examining team was looking for an evaluation of how effective the report was in conveying information about the company's performance and clearly candidates did not realise this.*

*Candidates need to more explicitly follow the requirements of the question as set. For example, if the examiner requires the candidate to refer to information in a particular table or appendix provided, then candidates should focus only on that information in answering the question and not take a broader and more generic approach.*

*There are two excellent articles on the website that focus on these specific issues and how candidates can improve their responses.*

See the following links:

<http://www.accaglobal.com/uk/en/student/acca-qual-student-journey/qual-resource/acca-qualification/p5/technical-articles/reading-the-question-requirements-of-paper-p5.html>

<http://www.accaglobal.com/uk/en/student/acca-qual-student-journey/qual-resource/acca-qualification/p5/technical-articles/improving-answers1.html>

- **Why don't more candidates watch the P5 video on the website?**

*More candidates should certainly watch this video. This is a very informative video to help improve the technique of candidates and will better support them as they attempt this examination.*

See the following link:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gouV\\_RTWZeE&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gouV_RTWZeE&feature=youtu.be)

- **Should candidates think more and write less when taking P5?**

*Generally, reading effectively and thinking more about the requirements of the questions saves time in the long run as it helps candidates focus on what is really required, rather than providing unnecessary or irrelevant information. Prize winning scripts are often shorter and contain lower word counts than many scripts that fail.*

*Time management is therefore very critical. Candidates should spend on average 1.8 minutes on each mark, so for example answering part of a question that is worth five marks should take not much longer than 9 or 10 minutes. Therefore in this instance, the candidate should allow themselves only the time necessary to write five clear and relevant points and then move on to the next requirement. Making more points than required cannot be rewarded and is wasting the candidate's and the marker's time.*

- **Does P5 ask F5 questions and will knowledge of F5 help in P5?**

*P5 does not ask questions in the style of F5, even though the same subjects may be examined. For example, F5 might require the calculation of standard cost variances or some basic analysis of these, whereas P5 may require a more in-depth interpretation of variances and the ability to analyse the interrelationship between variances and their underlying causes with a view to improving performance or evaluating the performance measurement systems behind the standard costing system.*

*The two papers are of completely different styles and requirements are set at very different levels. However, underpinning knowledge of F5 is extremely useful as preparation for P5, but it is taken much further in P5. Candidates who have forgotten their learning in F5 would be well advised to revise the key techniques of F5 as these*

are assumed knowledge in P5. There is an excellent article identifying the key underpinning knowledge required.

See the following link:

<http://www.accaglobal.com/uk/en/student/acca-qual-student-journey/qual-resource/acca-qualification/p5/technical-articles/moving-up-from-paper-f5-to-paper-p5.html>

- **Are difficulties with written English an impediment to performing well in P5?**

*Poor English or English which has poor style or grammar will not lose technical marks as long as the points can be understood and are correct and relevant to the requirement. Poor English or the inability to adopt an appropriate tone or expression to meet some requirements under professional marks will inevitably be harder to obtain because of the nature of professional marks which are focused more on written communication rather than technical capability.*

- **Is work experience helpful in passing P5?**

*While relevant work experience in a management accounting environment may be helpful to candidates to understand some of the scenarios within P5, it is not necessary to have relevant working experience to pass the P5 paper and not having such experience should not be a disadvantage to candidates. The scenarios within P5 are drawn from a range of business sectors, so it is unlikely that many candidates would have sufficiently broad experience to be able to exploit such an advantage. The key point is that candidates need to properly understand the situation explained in the scenario and take a practical approach to answering the question as if they were somehow experiencing this situation themselves.*

- **Is question practice beneficial?**

*Yes, definitely. There are now 14 past exams and a pilot paper to review as part of the revision. It is well worthwhile revising from these questions and answers or at least a representative sample of them to gain an insight into the types of approaches required to be successful. Please remember that the answers are usually presented in far more detail than would be expected from the average successful candidate, but they are a valuable source of information and material to work from.*

*Question from the P5 examining team to the audience.*

- **Do we provide too much information on P5 on the website?**

*The audience felt that the more relevant and helpful information published, the better.*