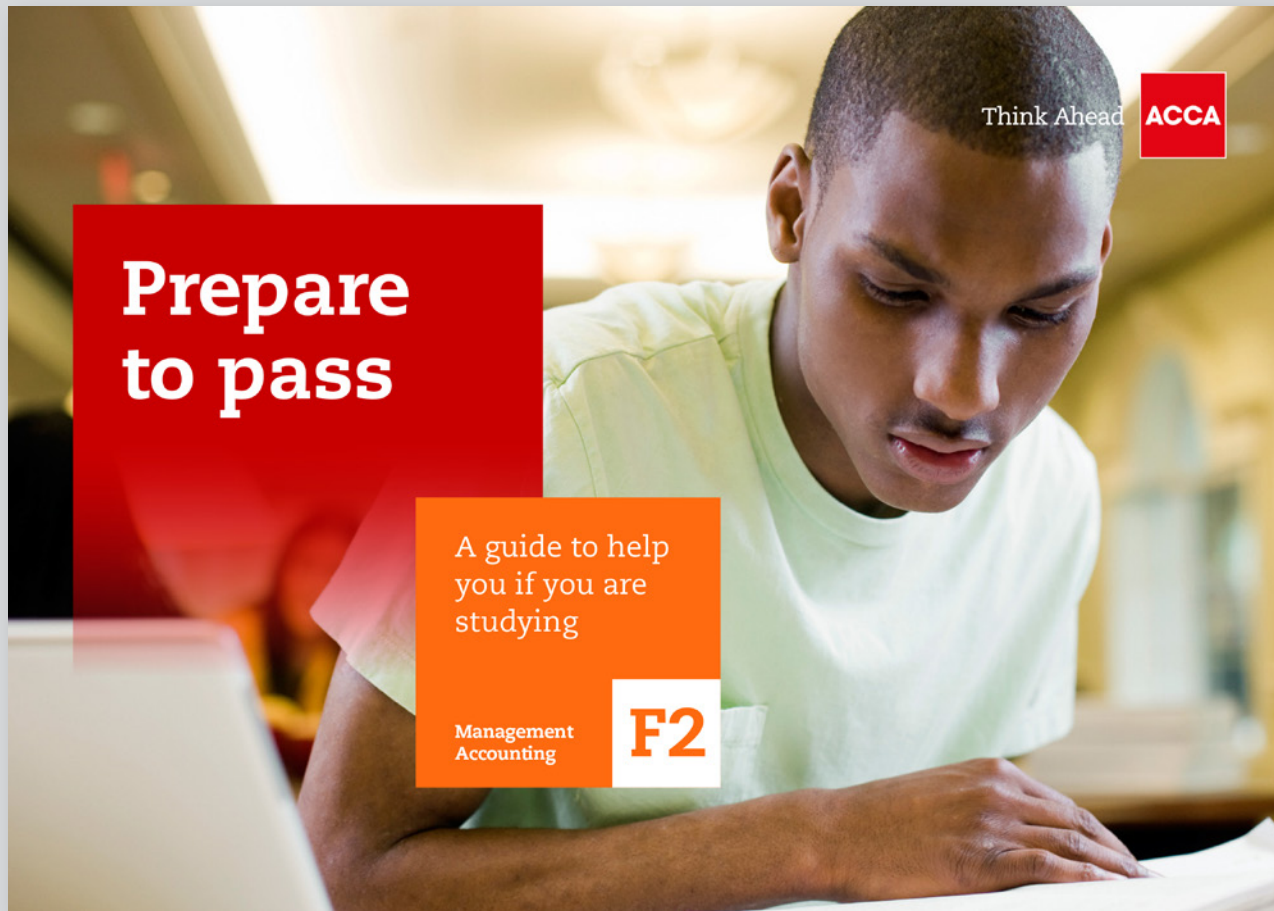


Think Ahead

ACCA



F2 Management Accounting – a guide to using the examiner's reports

ACCA's self-study guide for F2 is a fantastic resource designed especially to help you if you are taking F2. Hopefully you have already had a chance to take a look at this but if not you can find it by clicking on the image above.

F2 Management Accounting – a guide to using the examiner's reports

Part of getting started is getting to know your exam and we recommend that you use the examiner's reports as a resource here.

In addition, when you come to the revision phase we strongly recommend that you come back to these reports and look at them in more detail.

The screenshot shows the 'F2 GUIDANCE FROM THE EXAMINING TEAM' page. At the top, there is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Students > Exam resources > Fundamentals level > F2 Management Accounting. Below this is the title 'F2 GUIDANCE FROM THE EXAMINING TEAM' and social media icons for email, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and a plus sign for more, with a count of 3.

On the left, under 'RELATED LINKS', there are three links: 'Video: Five minutes with the examining team', 'Examiner's guidance: Changes to the structure of Paper F2/FMA in 2014', and 'Adobe reader'.

The main content area has a paragraph: 'The examiners' reports are an essential study resource. Read them to learn about mistakes that students commonly make in exams and how to avoid them. The guidance articles and video set out the general approach to the syllabus and the exam, and provide tips on how to improve your exam performance.'

Below this are two expandable sections: 'EXAMINER'S REPORTS' and 'EXAMINER'S GUIDANCE', both with downward arrow icons.

Under 'EXAMINER'S GUIDANCE', there is a section for 'EXAM SUPPORT RESOURCES' with the text 'Return to the exam resource finder to locate other materials to help with your studies' and a red 'SEARCH EXAM RESOURCES' button. To the right of this section are three red icons: a document, a head with a brain, and a magnifying glass over a star.

At the bottom left, under 'RELATED DOCUMENTS', there is a PDF icon and the text 'F2 examiner's report - December 2016' and 'PDF 41KB'. To the right of this, it says 'Last updated: 16 Jan 2017'.

On the right side of the page, there is a vertical menu with the following items: 'SYLLABUS AND STUDY GUIDE', 'EXAMINING TEAM GUIDANCE' (highlighted with a yellow arrow), 'SPECIMEN EXAMS', 'SELF-STUDY GUIDES', 'TECHNICAL ARTICLES', 'EXAM FORMULAE AND MATHS TABLES', 'PRACTICE TESTS', and 'FAQS'. Below this menu is a yellow box with a red 'Book now' button.

You can access the examiner's reports for F2 by clicking on the image above. We suggest that at the very least you take a look at the last four – but of course you can look at as many as you like!



Examiner's reports

What are the examiner's reports?

The reports are produced every six months and provide an analysis of students' performance – what they did well and what they didn't do so well.

They tell you which parts of the exam students found challenging and identify some of the key areas where students appear to lack knowledge as well as where they have demonstrated poor exam technique. The reports refer to specific questions in the exam, looking in detail at areas which caused difficulty. They also provide lots of useful tips.

How will the reports help you when you are revising for your exam?

If you review several of these reports you will notice that there are some key themes which the examining team comment on again and again. Typically students fail for the same reasons exam sitting after exam sitting.

For you to succeed in your exam you need to try to avoid the pitfalls that have led to students failing F2.

What are we going to do now?

In this guide we are going to show you how to use the examiner's reports as part of your revision phase.

F2 Management Accounting – a guide to using the examiner's reports

Step 1 – Read the last four examiner's reports

Read through each of the last four examiner's reports for F2.

- ✓ As you go through them note down any themes you notice which come up more than once.
- ✓ Also try to note down any areas where the examining team is providing advice – for example, you may see in the December 2016 report there is some advice on attempting all questions in the examination.

Examiner's report

F2/FMA Management Accounting

For CBE and Paper exams covering July to December 2016

ACCA

Future candidates are advised to:

- Study the whole syllabus, because the paper will cover the full syllabus.
- Practise as many multiple choice questions as possible.
- Read questions very carefully in the examination
- Ensure that their calculations are complete before selecting their answer to multiple choice questions
- Try to attempt the "easy" examination questions first.
- Not to spend too much time on apparently "difficult" questions.
- **Attempt all questions in the examination (there are no negative marks for incorrect answers).**
- Present section B answers as tidily as possible and ensure that all parts of the question are answered (written paper candidates only)
- Read previous Examiner's Reports



Take note

You may need to read through each of the reports a couple of times – but to get you started you might note down:

Attempt all questions

You will see this pops up several times, for example in the June 2016 report.

F2 Management Accounting – a guide to using the examiner's reports

Now use this page to note down other themes or advice you notice which come up... include a reference to the report – so the exam sitting and the question number, the theme and then a bit of context (see example below)

Reference	Theme	Context
D16 End	Attempt all questions	Attempt all questions in the examination (there are no negative marks for incorrect answers).

F2 Management Accounting – a guide to using the examiner's reports

Step 2 – Common themes identified by the examining team over the last four exam sittings

Now compare your list with our list over the following pages – how many did you identify?

Spend some time looking through the reports again with the table over the following pages at your side, to make sure you understand where each of the points comes from. You will see we have also included an additional column 'How to avoid the pitfalls' and we will talk about this in Step 3.

Reference	Theme	Context	How to avoid the pitfalls
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	Reading questions	Questions can often be misread by candidates, who then end up answering the question they thought was set (or that they wanted to be set), rather than the one that was set.	Questions should be read twice unless you are absolutely certain of the correct answer. An alternative approach would be to defer completion of certain questions to a later stage of the exam if too long was being spent on it.
D16 End J16 End D15 End	Calculation questions	Candidates who fail to perform the full or entire calculation for a MCQ run the risk of selecting the wrong answer.	You should ensure that your calculations are complete before you select the answer to a multiple choice question. Practising lots of questions will build your confidence and technique and will ensure you complete calculations wherever possible.
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	Easy questions first	Time management can be an issue and it is easy to get stuck on a hard question and to end up wasting valuable time that should have been allocated to other questions, some of which would be much easier.	It may be helpful to split your time so that you focus initially on the easier questions. Once you have answered these, you can then 'sweep' through the exam paper again to attempt the more difficult questions. Leave yourself enough time to have a reasonable attempt at all questions.
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	Attempt all questions	There is no negative marking in the exam. If you don't know the correct answer, an educated guess is always better than no answer at all.	You should attempt every question in the exam. Practice as many questions as possible and make sure that you try to eliminate distractors that are obviously incorrect before then selecting from the remaining distractors to choose the right answer.
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	Tidy presentation (paper based exams only)	Answers that are written in an untidy manner or that are illegible will mean that the examiner may be unable to award marks even though you may have known the area in question.	You should practice your handwriting to ensure that it is easy to read and laid out in a neat way so that the examiner will find it easy to mark. Doing lots of question practice will assist with this.



Take note

Note that some of the comments contained in the examiner's reports, such as presenting answers as tidily as possible, apply only to the paper based examinations.

F2 Management Accounting – a guide to using the examiner's reports

Reference	Theme	Context	How to avoid the pitfalls
D16 General J16 General D15 General J15 General	Poor performance on calculation questions	As is usual for this exam, numerical Section A questions were answered worse than the narrative based questions.	You should practice Section A numerical questions extensively to be comfortable with the calculations involved. Make sure you understand where you have gone wrong if you make any mistakes, before moving onto another question. It is far better to do fewer questions well, and learn from them, rather than doing a lot of questions poorly.
J15 Example 2	Reading the question carefully and thoroughly	This narrative question required the identification of the correct formula to calculate the net cost to the company of one unit of abnormal loss. It looked more straight-forward than it actually was.	The question needs to be read through carefully and thoroughly, doing so twice if necessary, to ensure that you are clear with respect to what question you are addressing.
J15 Example 3		This was a difficult question that gave information about the under/over absorbed overhead account in 'T' account format and then asked for identification of the correct statement about the cost on which the overhead was being absorbed.	Review the technical article on fixed overhead absorption for more guidance on this area.
D16 Example 1 D15 Example 1 D15 Example 3 D16 Example 3	Lack of knowledge – Section A questions	The question required you to know how to account for by-products either by netting off their net realisable value against pre-separation point costs or by adding their income to that of the main product. This question required identification of the true statement with respect to changes in contribution arising from a doubling in output. The question required candidates to know that costs apportioned on a relative sales basis will lead to the same operating margin being generated for both products. This question asked for identification of a measure that would not be fair, given differences in rental costs between two shops. It required knowledge of ratios and which would be impacted by this operating cost.	Ensure that your knowledge base is well spread amongst all syllabus areas to minimise the situations in which knowledge is weak. Review the technical articles for more guidance and explanation on specific syllabus areas. Refer to the most up to date syllabus and study guide to ensure you know exactly what the syllabus contains. You should be able to put simple numbers to these kinds of questions to illustrate the circumstances given to you by the examiner. In this way, the correct answer should become clear. Review the technical article on ratio analysis for more guidance on this area.

F2 Management Accounting – a guide to using the examiner's reports

Reference	Theme	Context	How to avoid the pitfalls
D15 Section B	Lack of knowledge – Section B questions	Candidates display a lack of knowledge concerning residual income.	Ensure that your knowledge base is well spread amongst all syllabus areas to minimise the situations in which knowledge is weak. Review the technical articles for more guidance and explanation on specific syllabus areas.
J15 Section B		Candidates have a poor understanding of purchases budgets, particularly the effect of production levels on purchases.	
J15 Section B		Candidates display an imprecise knowledge of value-for-money concepts, particularly economy and efficiency.	
D16 Example 2 D15 Example 2	Poor performance on spreadsheet questions	The first question required identification of the correct cell formula to calculate contribution and the second required calculation of a four quarter moving average.	You must be able to combine a knowledge of the underlying management accounting area with a knowledge of how spreadsheets work. This comes through a combination of revision and question practice.
D16 Section B D15 Section B J16 Section B		Candidates have an apparent difficulty with questions that are presented in a spreadsheet format.	
J16 Example 1		This question required calculation of the actual contribution in a standard costing situation.	
J16 Example 2	Poor performance on calculation questions – Section A	This question required the reapportionment of service department costs using the repeated distribution method. Students failed to identify the point at which one of the service departments was clear of costs.	You should practice Section A numerical questions extensively to be comfortable with the calculations involved. Review the technical article on re-apportionment of service cost centre costs for more guidance on this area.
J16 Example 3		This question required calculation of the flexed budget profit once output went beyond a step up in fixed costs. It required correct application of the principle of contribution and of the concept of fixed overall, rather than fixed unit, costs.	Ensure that all calculation questions are taken through to completion as some candidates choose incorrect answers having not completed full calculations.
J15 Example 1		The question required calculation of a missing variable cost variance, given two existing components of variable cost variance plus one fixed overhead variance.	Combine question practice with a strong knowledge base across all syllabus areas.

F2 Management Accounting – a guide to using the examiner's reports

Reference	Theme	Context	How to avoid the pitfalls
D16 Section B J16 Section B	Poor performance on calculation questions – Section B	Candidates display an inability to calculate cash flows in net present value (NPV) questions.	<p>You should practise Section B numerical questions extensively to be comfortable with the calculations involved.</p> <p>Ensure that all calculation questions are taken through to completion as some candidates choose incorrect answers having not completed full calculations.</p> <p>These section B topic areas cover core syllabus areas and so you should ensure that your knowledge base is strong across all these areas.</p> <p>Review the technical article on re-apportionment of service cost centre costs for more guidance on this area.</p>
D16 Section B J16 Section B D15 Section B J15 Section B		Candidates have an inability to calculate and explain direct labour and direct material variances, sales volume and sales price variances, fixed production overhead expenditure, volume, capacity and efficiency variances.	
D16 Section B J16 Section B		Candidates experience difficulty with questions that involve the reconciliation of actual and budgeted figures via standard costing variances.	
J16 Section B		Candidates display an inability to calculate asset turnover and inventory days ratios.	
D15 Section B		Candidates experience difficulty with questions involving the reconciliation of actual and budgeted figures.	
D15 Section B		Candidates fail to include scrap value of assets in payback and NPV calculations.	
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	Full syllabus coverage	The exam will cover the full syllabus and so you should cover all areas of the syllabus as part of your study plan.	If you are unsure what depth of knowledge is required in a particular area, use the specimen exam and question practice to guide you as to the likely nature of questions in the real exam. Refer to the most up to date syllabus and study guide to ensure you know exactly what the syllabus contains.
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	MCQ practice	Multiple choice questions involve a combination of knowledge and question technique, which means that you should practise as many as possible of the available MCQs prior to sitting the real exam.	
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End			Your focus should be on consolidating your knowledge and on building your question answering technique. Refer to the technical article on how to answer multiple-choice questions for more guidance on this area.

F2 Management Accounting – a guide to using the examiner's reports

Reference	Theme	Context	How to avoid the pitfalls
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	Reading questions	Questions can often be misread by candidates, who then end up answering the question they thought was set (or that they wanted to be set), rather than the one that was set.	Questions should be read twice unless you are absolutely certain of the correct answer. An alternative approach would be to defer completion of certain questions to a later stage of the exam if too long was being spent on it.
D16 End J16 End D15 End	Calculation questions	Candidates who fail to perform the full or entire calculation for a MCQ run the risk of selecting the wrong answer.	You should ensure that your calculations are complete before you select the answer to a multiple choice question. Practising lots of questions will build your confidence and technique and will ensure you complete calculations wherever possible.
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	Easy questions first	Time management can be an issue and it is easy to get stuck on a hard question and to end up wasting valuable time that should have been allocated to other questions, some of which would be much easier.	It may be helpful to split your time so that you focus initially on the easier questions. Once you have answered these, you can then 'sweep' through the exam paper again to attempt the more difficult questions. Leave yourself enough time to have a reasonable attempt at all questions.
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	Attempt all questions	Attempt all questions in the examination (there are no negative marks for incorrect answers).	You should attempt every question in the exam. Practise as many questions as possible and make sure that you try to eliminate distractors that are obviously incorrect before then selecting from the remaining options to choose the right answer.
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	Tidy presentation (paper based exams only)	Answers that are written in an untidy manner or that are illegible will mean that the examiner may be unable to award marks even though you may have known the area in question.	You should practise your handwriting to ensure that it is easy to read and laid out in a neat way so that the examiner will find it easy to mark. Doing lots of question practice will assist with this.
D16 End J16 End D15 End J15 End	Examiner's reports	Previous examiner's reports, as we can see from this document, contain a lot of useful information that will help you improve your exam performance.	Ensure that you carefully study past examiner's reports for advice and guidance on where students typically go wrong in exams and what to focus on as part of your preparation for the examination.

F2 Management Accounting – a guide to using the examiner's reports

Step 3 – Question practice

The key to passing F2 is question practice. Make sure you refer to the self-study guide for hints and tips but keep in mind what the examiner's reports have said. You want to try to avoid the pitfalls so use the advice given in the table at step 2 when practising your questions.

Revision phase – Question practice

- Exam-standard question practice is vital now
- Work through as many questions as possible and all mock exams included in the [Approved Content Provider](#) question and answer banks – remember these are best for question practice as they include past exam questions updated for syllabus and format changes
- Work through the [specimen exam](#) – this will provide you with a clear picture of what the exam will look like making sure you know what to expect on the day



Tips for success

- ✓ Consider blocking time in your study plan for specific questions or mock exams to ensure you cover everything.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to attempt questions you have already done – especially the ones you found tricky first time round.
- ✓ It is really important that you do some questions in full, to exam time – time management is often an issue and the more you prepare yourself the better you will perform in the exam.
- ✓ To keep motivation high, break some questions into individual parts, write plans or notes for some parts and do others in full.
- ✓ Work through the answers carefully – pay attention to areas you got wrong and understand where you went wrong – it is better to do a few questions well than lots of questions badly.
- ✓ Try not to look at the answers before really attempting the question – you won't be able to do this in the real exam!