

Think Ahead

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**Prepare  
to pass**

A guide to help  
you if you are  
studying

Business  
Analysis

**P3**

# P3 Business Analysis –

a guide to using the  
examiner's reports

ACCA's self-study guide for P3 is a fantastic resource designed especially to help you if you are taking P3. 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.

## P3 Business Analysis – 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.

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### P3 GUIDANCE FROM THE EXAMINING TEAM

RELATED LINKS

- [Video: Five minutes with the P3 examining team](#)
- [P3 examiner's approach article](#)
- [P3 examiner's approach interview](#)
- [Adobe reader](#)

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 interviews set out the general approach to the syllabus and the exam, and provide tips on how to improve your exam performance.

EXAMINER'S REPORTS

EXAMINER'S GUIDANCE

EXAM SUPPORT RESOURCES

Return to the exam resource finder to locate other materials to help with your studies

SEARCH EXAM RESOURCES

SYLLABUS AND STUDY GUIDE

EXAMINING TEAM GUIDANCE

SPECIMEN EXAMS

PAST EXAM PAPERS

TECHNICAL ARTICLES

RELATED DOCUMENTS

**P3 examiner's report - December 2015**  
PDF format 34KB

Last updated: 8 Feb 2016

You can access the examiner's reports for P3 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 after each exam sitting 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 P3.

## What are we going to do now?

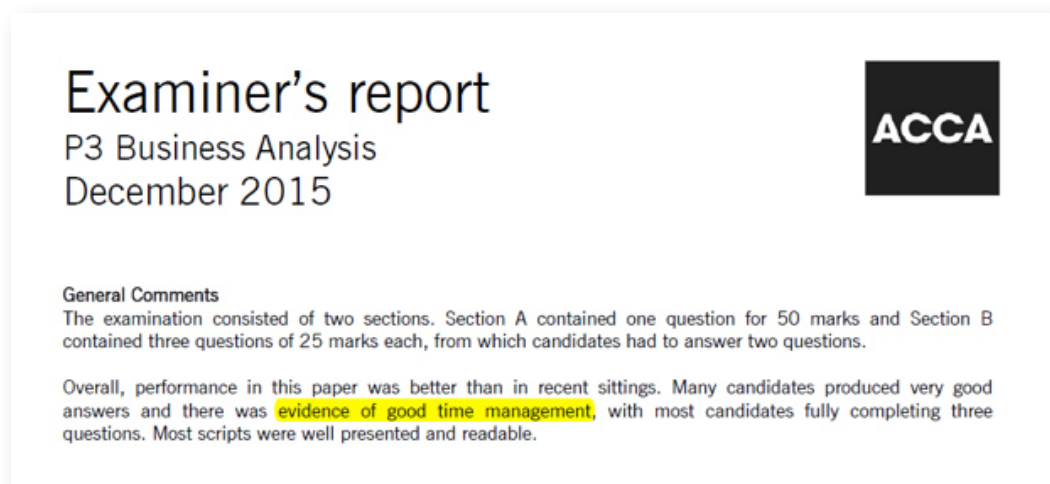
In this document we are going to show you how to use the examiner's reports as part of your revision phase.

# P3 Business Analysis – 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 P3.

- ✓ 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 2015 report there is some advice about the balance of points you should make when using various frameworks, as well as a comment about time management.



### 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:

*Time management*

You will see this pops up several times, for example in the December 2015 report.

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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
D15 General comments	Time management	Good – evidence of students fully completing three questions
S15 General comments		Poor – including lengthy details from scenario, not focussing on question requirements

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### 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
D15 General comments S15 General comments	Time management	Good – evidence of students fully completing three questions  Poor – including lengthy details from scenario, not focussing on question requirements	The key to overcoming time management issues is to make sure you practise questions and at least one full mock exam to time.  In addition, make sure you look at the number of marks available for a given requirement – these will provide you with a guide to roughly how long you should be spending on each part.
D15 Q4 J15 Q1 J15 Q4	Repeating statements from scenario	No theoretical context given (so not using knowledge)  The regurgitation of facts from the scenario is not analysis – led to time management problems  Facts from case reiterated and not presented in the context of analysis	When practising questions make sure you spend time reviewing the answer carefully.  Try to spot where in the answer the scenario is used and how it is used. If you are simply repeating statements from the scenario without linking those statements to your answer then you are wasting valuable exam time.
D14 General comments	Describing detail of models	Too much detail about the models and valuable time wasted	When reviewing your answers to practice questions compare with the marking guide to determine whether you have written too much detail about any models you have used. In addition take a look at the study support video 'Key models in the Paper P3 exam' which can be found under the technical articles for P3.



### Take note

Note that this table is based on the examiner's reports for December 2015, September 2015, June 2015 and December 2014 – if you are sitting exams post June 2016 you may find some different references.

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D14 General comments	Describing detail of models	Too much detail about the models and valuable time wasted	When reviewing your answers to practice questions compare with the marking guide to determine whether you have written too much detail about any models you have used. In addition take a look at the study support video ' <a href="#">Key models in the Paper P3 exam</a> ' which can be found under the technical articles for P3.
J15 Q1	Not answering all parts of the question	Many candidates did not attempt part b – they should have allowed thirty minutes to answer	After completing a practice mock exam to time, check that you allowed enough time to complete all of the parts of every requirement and that you didn't miss any out.
D15 General comments S15 Q4 D14 General comments D14 Q2	Not using quantitative data	Simple calculations and analysis will be rewarded  Students unwilling to attempt questions requiring quantitative analysis  Appeared in three questions – it was often ignored so simple conclusions were not made and marks lost  Answers too general and did not use the data or offer evidence to support the answer	When practising questions which include calculative elements check that you have done all of the calculations necessary to support and justify your narrative answers.

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Reference	Theme	Context	How to avoid the pitfalls
D15 Q1	Elements of frameworks unlikely to be equally balanced	Tailor answer to balance of points in the scenario	<p>If you practise questions using models assess whether you have included broadly the right number of points for each element of any framework depending on the details given in the scenario for each element.</p> <p>If, for example, you have used Porter's Five Forces there may be more marks awarded for points made about 'barriers to new entrants' than there are for 'threat of substitutes' – the balance of marks will always depend on the detail provided in the scenario.</p>
D15 Q1 D14 General comments	Professional marks	<p>Available for answers that are clear, have appropriate tone and vocabulary and adopted a professional approach</p> <p>Available for clarity, structure, logical flow, appropriate tone and vocabulary</p>	<p>Assess whether your answer to practice questions would be written well enough to obtain the professional marks.</p> <p>For further guidance watch the video 'Professional marks – the difference between a pass and fail' which can be found under the <a href="#">study support videos</a> for P3.</p> <p>Also keep in mind that ACCA does not penalise for poor grammar as we recognise that English is not the first language for many of our students.</p>
D15 Q2 S15 Q3	Commenting on value rather than relevance or usefulness	<p>Needed to comment on relevance of costs for investment appraisal not question the value of the cost (eg suggesting it could be cheaper if from another supplier)</p> <p>Students discussed how CSFs could be achieved and data could be gathered to measure KPIs rather than an evaluation of CSFs and KPIs</p>	<p>Make sure you understand what the verb 'evaluate' means. Take a look at the Student Accountant article '<a href="#">Answering the Question</a>' for more help understanding the verbs used in exam questions.</p>



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Reference	Theme	Context	How to avoid the pitfalls
D15 Q2 S15 Q1	Not answering the question or irrelevant answers	Describing the whole project life cycle rather than just project planning (which was the subject of the question)  Asked to suggest a better process and how it could resolve problems but students discussed what was wrong with the process	As this is a common problem across all types of P3 question, the key here is to spend plenty of time reviewing your answer against the model answer when practising questions as well as double checking the requirement to make sure you understand what is being asked for.  You need to make sure that you are answering the question that was set, so for each paragraph you have written, check it against the model answer to determine whether it aligns – and if it doesn't, then ask yourself whether what you have written actually answers the requirement.  You may think that you have seen similar question requirements before but be aware although they may be familiar, the exact same question requirements will not be repeated.
D15 Q3	Identification of each area in answer	Not separating out four separate problems – use numbering or introductory text	Review your answers to questions to make sure you are clearly separating out the right number of points where this is specified in the requirements.  If the specific number of points required is not stated still be sure to separate your points by using separate paragraphs or by using linking words, so for example 'Firstly... Secondly... etc'.  Consider asking a friend or colleague to tell you whether they can clearly see the right number of points.
D15 Q3 S15 Q2 S15 Q3 S15 Q4 D14 Q3	Application not regurgitation	Answer needs to be presented in the context of the question  Theoretical description of CRM with no application to the scenario  No application of benchmarking to the scenario  Specific costing technique not applied to scenario  Little linkage to the projects described in the scenario	Read through your practice answers and make sure you have used the scenario appropriately.  Make sure you have used the names of organisations or people referred to in the scenario.  Skim through the scenario and ask yourself whether you have appropriately used the majority of the information provided in your answer. If you haven't then maybe you have not linked your answer to the scenario sufficiently.

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Reference	Theme	Context	How to avoid the pitfalls
D15 Q4	Exams are not silos	Issues and dilemmas covered in other exams	Be aware that your knowledge from previous exams may be useful in answering P3 questions – although be careful not to use other knowledge in too much detail as this will not score marks.
J15 Q2	Insufficient number of points	Students did not make enough points about each generic strategy to score marks	Check your answers to practice questions against the model answer and marking guide to ensure that you have made sufficient points to gain a pass.
D15 Q3	Poor knowledge – job re-design	Students repeated points from first part of answer	For any areas where poor knowledge is an issue make sure you find practice questions to help improve your knowledge of that area. Each of the Approved Content Provider question banks lists out questions under topic headings so use this to help plan which questions to practise.  Also, make sure you read any <a href="#">technical articles</a> related to the area you find challenging – the examining team produce lots of useful articles especially to cover areas that students tend to find difficult or new areas of the syllabus that have not been tested before.
S15 Q3	Poor knowledge – integrated reporting	Integrated reporting is embedded in syllabus and Student Accountant article written	
S14 Q4	Poor knowledge – variances	Students showed lack of understanding	
J15 Q4	Poor knowledge – concept of a learning organisation and knowledge management	Students knew very little about this concept – Student Accountant articles written	
D14 Q4	Poor knowledge – least squares linear regression	Students unfamiliar with least squares linear regression	

# P3 Business Analysis – a guide to using the examiner's reports

## Step 3 – Question practice

The key to passing P3 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 most recent [past exam for P3](#) – 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!
- ✓ Don't forget to review the marking guide too – you need to understand how marks are allocated to ensure you know how to maximise your marks.