

# AB Retake guide

▪ Plan ▪ Prepare ▪ Pass

Accountant in Business (AB)

# ▪ Plan ▪ Prepare ▪ Pass

Welcome to your guide helping you to retake your Accountant in Business exam

## Why use this guide?

- ✓ A structured approach to help you succeed in your retake
- ✓ Signposted resources and how to use them
- ✓ Tips for success to help you pass this time
- ✓ Interactive clickable checklists to keep you on track

This guide applies to exams from September 2018 to August 2019.

## Sections

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# Reflect

## Understand where you went wrong

Students usually fail an exam because they do not have the necessary knowledge OR they have poor exam technique OR a combination of both – the first step to success in studying for your retake is to understand the reason you failed.

In this section we will help you to understand where you went wrong and then in the next two sections we will take you through what you should do to ensure you pass your retake exam.

## Reflect – Resources to help you understand where you went wrong



### Student quote

#### Conquer the fear of failure

“During my break at work I make sure I read a chapter or solve exercises in my book. All in all, you know yourself - you know your limits and capabilities, but you need to conquer the fear of failure and note something down somewhere that will give you that motivation and determination that will keep you going. For me, it was my family’s sacrifice in helping to fund my studies.”

**Audit and Assurance retake student, UAE**

- Review the last four available [examiner’s reports](#) for Accountant in Business in detail



These provide you with feedback on students’ performance in each exam, highlighting problem areas that students need to improve on and telling you what the examining teams are looking for – work through the reports carefully, trying to identify whether the issues highlighted were issues for you in your exam

Remember that students often make the same mistakes exam sitting after exam sitting and you will see that the examining teams talk about the same key knowledge areas and the same issues around exam technique time and time again. Really think about whether you have made these mistakes as, once you know what caused you to fail, you can work on improving that area. We will show you how in the next two sections

- Listen to [five minutes with the examining team](#)



In this short recording the examining team talk about areas where students commonly make mistakes and what their approach should be. Again, try to determine whether the issues the examining team talks about are issues that applied to you when you took this exam

## Reflect – Resources to help you understand where you went wrong

### Extract from five minutes with the examining team

Remember that the key to studying for this exam is **gaining a broad working knowledge and understanding** of all areas across the syllabus so that you know the basics about accountancy within business organisations.

You should also learn, and be familiar with, the specific **theories, models, processes or principles named in the syllabus and study guide**.

When taking the real exam, you should allocate time properly to questions ..... follow the instructions in the question requirement and **give only the response required**. The AB exam does not require candidates to write out narrative answers in either part A or part B.



### Tips for success

- ✓ Don't give up. Use this guide to help you achieve success in your retake. Start by thinking positively and believing you will pass this time.

### Extract from the December 2017 examiner's report

None of the topics examined in the AB/FAB paper requires comprehensive knowledge of every theory, concept or subject. The best approach is to build a general understanding of as many topics as possible.

Most candidates will benefit by spending more time on understanding the technical words and jargon associate with the study of management, organisations and human behaviour. The more complicated theories may not always be the most difficult to understand, as some of the words and phrases encountered will serve as 'triggers' to memory. At the same time, it should never be assumed that even subjects which appear to be 'common sense' will be easier in an examination environment. Those who practice questions across the whole syllabus are spending their preparation and revision time wisely.



## Reflect – Other hints to help you understand where you went wrong



### Tips for success

#### Join events in the [ACCA Learning Community](#)

- ✓ ACCA regularly hosts events in the Learning Room which you can access via the Learning Community. These are planned around your exams and cover technical topics as well as more general exam technique.

#### Take advantage of any new resources provided specifically for you, to help you with your retake

- ✓ ACCA is continually producing new resources developed specifically to help you pass your exam whether it be the first time or a retake, so keep an eye on [Student Accountant](#), and the [technical articles](#) on the website (where you will find not only specific syllabus areas covered but also exam technique articles and study support videos).
- ✓ If you haven't done so already make sure you have personalised your edition of [Student Accountant](#) to ensure you receive advice specific to your exam.



### Why did you fail?

#### Marginal fail?

- ✗ If you scored a marginal fail (between 45% and 49%) last time it is likely that you failed because of poor exam technique.

#### Very low mark?

- ✗ If you scored a very low mark (perhaps under 25%) last time then it is more likely that your mark is due to lack of knowledge.

#### Did you struggle to come up with answers?

- ✗ It's more likely to be a lack of knowledge if you felt that you were guessing answers.

#### Did you run out of time?

- ✗ It's more likely to be poor exam technique if you ran out of time, so make sure you allocate your time across the sections of the exam so you don't miss out on any marks.

## Reflect – Before you leave this section...

Have you identified where you went wrong last time?

- Lack of knowledge
- Poor exam technique
- A combination of the two

If you really are not sure, then assume it was a combination of the two, and move on to the next section where we will help you to plan the time between now and your retake.



### Tips for success

- ✓ Discuss your thoughts with colleagues, tutors or your peers to see if they agree with your conclusions.
- ✓ Don't feel alone or fed up because you failed last time... join the [ACCA Learning Community](#) and find other students in a similar position to you. Share ideas and thoughts, or perhaps find a study buddy to help keep you motivated.
- ✓ Don't dwell on this stage too long. The more time you spend dwelling on your last attempt, the less time you will have to improve ready for your retake!



# Plan

## Your checklist

Now that you have a better idea of where you went wrong last time, it's time to draw up a plan to help you manage your time between now and your retake exam

- Draw up your retake study plan
- Obtain an Approved Content Provider question and answer bank
- Review the syllabus and study guide for your retake sitting

# Plan – Draw up your study plan

## Study plan checklist

- Enter for your retake as soon as possible direct with the CBE centre
- Calculate the number of weeks from now until your exam date and draw up a plan – see the example to the left and a possible proforma for you to use on the next page
- You may need to add or take away weeks depending on when you are sitting your retake
- Block out days/half days/evenings already committed to family/social events
- Plan study periods – evenings/half days/full days

|        | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| Week 1 | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| Week 2 | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| Week 3 | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| Week 4 | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| Week 5 | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| Week 6 | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |

Evening study period
  Daytime study period
  Other commitments

# Plan – Your study plan

Print out and fill in when you will study for your retake

|        | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| Week 1 |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| Week 2 |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| Week 3 |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| Week 4 |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| Week 5 |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| Week 6 |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |

Evening study period     Daytime study period     Other commitments

Colour boxes in your preferred highlighter colours.

## Plan – Populate your plan with questions to practise

Now that you have worked out when you will study for your retake, you need to think about which questions you are going to practise. Although you won't be able to plan every question in advance it is a good idea to decide on some key questions as well as scheduling in some time to attempt at least one full mock exam.

- Ensure you have the latest edition of the AB [Approved Content Provider](#) question and answer bank as this contains past exam questions updated for changes to the syllabus, question style and exam format as well as practice questions and answers and full mock exams to ensure you are fully prepared for your retake.
- Note that the question and answer bank you used for your last attempt may not be up to date. Check your version and if it is out of date we strongly recommend you buy the latest edition.
- Remember syllabuses and study guides are updated on a regular basis, so review the [syllabus and study guide](#) for your retake sitting and familiarise yourself with any changes to the content of the syllabus or the exam format since your last attempt.



### Tips for success

#### If you failed because of a lack of knowledge

- ✓ Look through your notes, study text and the [syllabus and study guide](#), and try to identify which areas you feel weakest in.
- ✓ The [Approved Content Provider](#) question and answer banks provide a list of questions by topic area. Use these to help you plan the questions you need to attempt and add them to your plan. If there has been a change to the syllabus make sure you include questions which test any new topics.
- ✓ Look for any [technical articles](#) which relate to the area of knowledge you need to focus on and add these to your plan. Remember the examining teams often write articles to cover the areas that students find challenging as well as areas that are new to the syllabus.

#### If you failed because of poor exam technique

- ✓ Make sure you include questions in your plan from across the whole syllabus.
- ✓ Schedule in time to watch the study support videos and review the exam technique articles which can be found under [technical articles](#) on the website. These will give you some pointers on how you can improve your technique.

## Plan – Tips for success



### Student quote

#### Read the technical articles

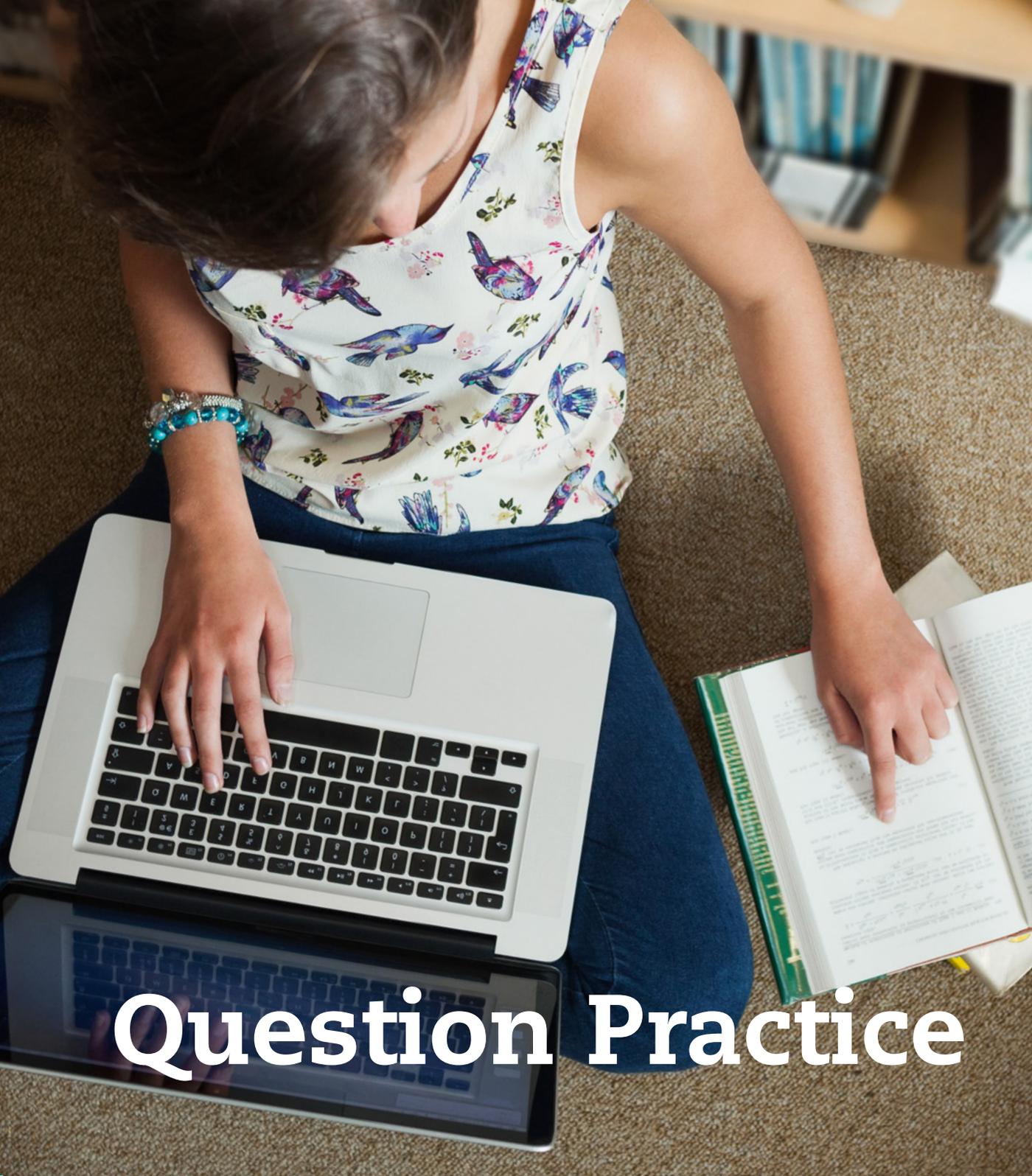
“After failing with 40% the first time, for my retake I made sure I read the technical articles carefully. I can’t stress more about the importance of these technical papers. Examples illustrated in these articles are so clear that it’s very hard to not understand them.”

**Advanced Financial Management retake student,  
China**



### Tips for success

- ✓ If you are able to, consider attending a course with an [Approved Learning Partner](#) or alternatively sign up for [ACCA-X](#). Either of these will help you to really understand what you need to know for your retake.
- ✓ Whatever the reason you failed last time you sat this exam, make sure you include questions from across the whole syllabus in your plan.
- ✓ Don’t forget to include time to practise at least one mock exam in full to time. This could be a mock from the [Approved Content Provider](#) question bank or perhaps the [specimen exam](#).
- ✓ ACCA has some great resources to help you around exam technique. Make sure you build some time in to review all the [exam technique and technical articles](#) as well as the [study support videos](#).



# Question Practice

## Your checklist

- Before you start
- Key skills
- Tips for success

## Question practice – Before you start

- If you haven't already, make sure you check the latest [syllabus and study guide](#) to ensure you are aware of any changes to the content of the syllabus, the style of exam questions or exam format for your retake
- Review again the [examiner's reports](#) and listen to [five minutes with the examining team](#) so that you have all of the examining team's comments in mind when you start working through questions
- Even if you have already done so, work through the [specimen exam](#) again to practice questions in the same format as the real exams.
- Think about purchasing a [Practice Test](#). These also replicate the exam format and give you personalised feedback diagrams so that you can refine your final revision.



### Tips for success

- ✓ Remember to think positively and don't give up on a question before you start. Every question you practise properly will bring you closer to a pass in your retake.



### Student quote

#### Learn from your mistakes

“The only way to pass an exam is to learn from your mistakes. On my fourth attempt at AA I realised that I was failing because of my lack of knowledge around audit procedures. Finally I was able to succeed in passing.”

**Audit and Assurance retake student, Pakistan**

# Question practice – Key skills you need to master



## Key Skills

### Time management

Ensure that you gain maximum marks through answering all of the questions set and giving yourself enough time for the more time-consuming scenario questions.

- ✓ In the exam you should allocate 1.2 minutes on average per mark available. You should do this when practising questions and mock exams too.
- ✓ Scenario based questions usually require more time to read through and answer so consider allocating slightly more time to these questions and slightly less time to the shorter questions.
- ✓ Don't rush objective test questions – they are easy to misread or misunderstand if you don't take the time to read them properly.

### Answering each question

Ensure you answer the question that was set, not the question you wish you had been set, in order to maximise your chances of success.

- ✓ Read the question and the answer options at least twice to ensure that you are clear on what the examiner is asking you to do.
- ✓ Eliminate distractors that are obviously wrong to reduce the number of distractors you need to choose between.
- ✓ If you're still unsure about which answer is the correct one, make an educated guess and don't leave any question unanswered.



## Student quote

### Find a new approach

“I had the knowledge but I did not attempt enough questions to learn the examiner’s style so I could better understand what he was asking in each question. The key to retaking this exam for me was to find a new approach, do as many questions as possible and ensure that I understood what I was being asked.”

**Advanced Performance Management  
retake student, Grand Cayman**

# Question practice – Tips for success



## Tips for success

### Learn from every question you do

Maximise the benefit of your question practice by reviewing what you have learnt on each occasion. Ask yourself the following questions. Did you:

- ✓ Answer all questions in the allocated time?
- ✓ Keep to time on the individual questions you answered?
- ✓ Carefully read the question and answer options at least twice?
- ✓ Eliminate distractors by a process of deduction?

### Additional tips:

- ✓ Do not try to question spot.
- ✓ Focus on doing less questions really well rather than lots of questions badly.
- ✓ Always review the answers to any questions that you either got wrong or that you guessed correctly. Guessing correctly still means that you have a weakness in your knowledge or exam technique.
- ✓ If you find you are still struggling with the technical knowledge you need to answer the question, refer back to your notes or study text and remind yourself of the key points.



### Extract from the December 2017 examiner's report

A very small minority of candidates did not complete all of the questions in part A. This was a missed opportunity, as even if the answer is not known it may be possible to make an informed guess once some of the distractors (incorrect answers) are eliminated.





# Final Tips

## Your checklist

- Make sure you are ready to walk into your retake exam

# Final Tips – Tips for success



## Tips for success

**Very few students enjoy taking exams but there are things you can do to make the experience less stressful!**

- ✓ Identify where the CBE centre is.
- ✓ Plan your route to the CBE centre, considering the time of day you will be travelling and any potential issues.
- ✓ Have in place a back-up plan in case of traffic problems or public transport delays.
- ✓ Ensure you have all the equipment you need for the exam (for example a calculator).
- ✓ Don't forget to take your exam docket with you as well as your student identification.
- ✓ Eat properly before you leave for the exam.
- ✓ Sleep properly! Don't spend the last night before your exam doing last minute revision, as you will perform so much better if you are alert and well rested (and in any case, last minute revision will only cause you to panic!)
- ✓ Try not to get into discussions with fellow students just before the exam about what might come up. Again this will only cause you stress.

### Once the exam is over:

- ✓ Relax.
- ✓ Don't over analyse – you cannot change anything now!

Good  
Luck!

# Appendix – Links

## Appendix – Links

| Page No. | Link                                  | URL   |
|----------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 04, 14   | Examiner's reports                    | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/examiners-reports.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/examiners-reports.html</a>       |
| 04, 14   | Five minutes with the examining team  | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/examiners-reports.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/examiners-reports.html</a>       |
| 06, 07   | ACCA Learning Community               | <a href="https://learningcommunity.accaglobal.com">https://learningcommunity.accaglobal.com</a>   |
| 06       | Student Accountant                    | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/sa.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/sa.html</a>   |
| 06, 11   | Technical articles                    | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html</a>     |
| 11, 12   | Approved Content Provider             | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/your-study-options/alp-content.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/your-study-options/alp-content.html</a>   |
| 11, 14   | Syllabus and study guide              | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/syllabus-study-guide.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/syllabus-study-guide.html</a> |
| 12       | Approved Learning Partner             | <a href="https://learningcommunity.accaglobal.com/#discover/1">https://learningcommunity.accaglobal.com/#discover/1</a>   |
| 12       | ACCA-X                                | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/your-study-options/acca-x-online-courses-from-acca.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/your-study-options/acca-x-online-courses-from-acca.html</a>   |
| 12, 14   | Specimen exam                         | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/pilot-papers.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/pilot-papers.html</a>                 |
| 12       | Exam technique and technical articles | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/pilot-papers.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/pilot-papers.html</a>                 |
| 12       | Study support videos                  | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html</a>     |
| 14       | Practice test                         | <a href="http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-entry-and-administration/preparing-for-exams/practice-tests.html">http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-entry-and-administration/preparing-for-exams/practice-tests.html</a>                                   |

