

CASE STUDY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OPERATIONAL LEVEL

The case study examination is a virtual business role play. Therefore, understanding your role in the case study examination can really help you produce a good answer at the right level for your audience. You could think of it almost as a job interview, offering you the opportunity to demonstrate to CIMA your competence at this level and in the role of a Finance Officer. The diagram below provides an overview of the role you will be playing at Operational level, who you will be seeking to influence and examples of the syllabus area you may be tested upon. **NOTE:** These are just illustrations to help you set the case study exam in context and are not exhaustive.

IN YOUR EXAM:

- Think and write from the perspective of who you are (your role).
- Identify what your line manager/audience wants from you (the task requirements), including the depth of detail required.
- Imagine this as a job interview, what would you need to do to show your competence to do the tasks required?
- Remember why you are supplying this information (e.g. to assist in decision making).
- Plan how you are going to communicate your response and to whom (format, tone, level of detail and technical complexity).
- Consider what the impact may be for other parts of the business, such as other stakeholders and the financial statements (this is where you may be able to demonstrate business and people skills and earn marks for integration).
- Consider what long term measures can be taken for driving performance of the business (this is where you may be able to demonstrate leadership skills and, by thinking beyond the task requirements, earn marks for integration). **NOTE:** As leadership skills and integration carry very few marks in the OCS, you will not fail, at this level, if you do not demonstrate them.

If you do this you will produce a good answer of the right breadth and depth which will gain marks across the competencies.

Who you are ?



At Operational level your role will be that of a Finance Officer.

Equivalent job titles in a real organisation might be:

- Junior/Trainee accountant
- Credit controller
- Assistant accountant
- Cost accountant

What is the main focus of your role?



**Overall focus is on budgets and the short term
(as responsible for implementation of the strategy)**

You may be involved in:

- Costing;
- Preparing budgets;
- Advising on product mix or performance;
- Variance analysis;
- Working capital or cash management;
- Producing reports of performance against budget;
- Risk assessment in short term decision making.

You will need to understand:

- The role of finance within the wider organisation;
- Who the stakeholders are;
- The regulatory environment;
- How to communicate with non-financial staff.

Who is your audience/who are you seeking to influence?



Your manager (Finance Manager/Finance Director), peers within the finance department and possibly in other Depts; you may need to gather information from, or present budget information to, non-financial colleagues.

Examples of topic areas and tasks you may be asked to look at in the exam based on Variant 1 of the November 2015 OCS.



Your role in this case:

You are a newly appointed Finance Officer in a family run horticulture company. Your predecessor has begun to set up some budgets and costings but the finance and administrative processes in the company are unsophisticated and there is little automation.

The emphasis in the OCS is the Performance pillar and Technical skills but all subjects will be tested. During the exam you will need to demonstrate:

Technical skills:

Planning and monitoring cash flows and the use of rolling budgets (F1 C3 and P1 B4);
Interpreting variances (P1 A1);
Treatment of R&D costs in financial statements (F1 B2).

Business skills:

Show understanding of how the finance function benefits the business (E1 B2).

People skills:

Explain why collaborative supply chains are useful to the business (E1 D1)

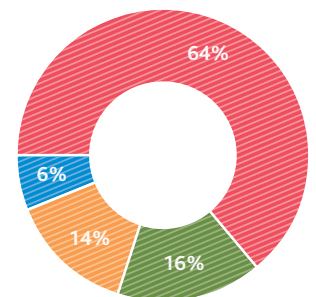
Leadership skills:

Leadership skills only account for 6% at this level and no one will fail due to a lack of leadership skills in the OCS. However they are tested eg in the variance analysis task above, discussing how planning and operational variances benefit the business would have attracted leadership marks.

Competency weightings for your exam

- Technical skills
- Business skills
- People skills
- Leadership skills

Competency Weighting is the basis of distribution of marks from various sections in the OCS exam. You will have to obtain minimum threshold marks (approximately 1/3) for each competency (except for Leadership skills) along with score of 80 to pass the OCS exam.



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