

CIMA Case Study (CS) Examinations candidates are from varied backgrounds, and will have differences in terms of, for example, time gaps between Objective Test (OT) Exams, exemptions, familiarity with CS Exams, etc. Therefore, a precise time period cannot be recommended as an ideal preparation time for CS Exams.

However, this checklist will guide candidates in what they need to do in order to be fully prepared for their CS Examination.

## Skills Development for CIMA CS Examinations

The advice below is mainly relevant to candidates who have never taken a CIMA CS Exam; however, it will also be helpful guidance for candidates of all levels. Ideally, candidates must have worked through this 10-point checklist before reading the pre-seen materials applicable to the CS Exam they plan to take.

**Before even looking at the pre-seen material for the CS Exam you plan to sit, ask yourself if you can answer yes to the following:**

- 1. Knowledge gaps** – I understand that CS Exams are designed to demonstrate mastery of previously acquired knowledge, skills and techniques covered in the three pillar subjects at the level in one single assessment. To ensure I have no knowledge gaps and/or to fill them:
  - I can assess if I need to refresh my knowledge of the core competencies.
  - I can take appropriate actions to refresh my knowledge (or bridge knowledge gaps, if any) through 'component outcomes' and 'task statements' in CIMA Examination Blueprints.
- 2. Role simulation** – I understand that I am required to demonstrate that I have acquired the knowledge, skills and mindset of the CIMA finance professional through a role simulation. To do this:
  - I can describe the role (persona) I will simulate in my CS Exam and link this to the expectations of finance professionals.
  - I can explain the 'core activities' that define the role specific to my level of CS Exam and demonstrate 'assessment outcomes' ('I can' statements) in the CIMA Examination Blueprints.
- 3. Examination format and features** – I understand that simulated CS Exams are based on scenarios developed around today's modern business environment, allowing me to demonstrate the 'core activities' that have been identified by employers as critical. To feel well-prepared:
  - I can describe the features and process of the CS Exam and am familiar with the testing environment (test driver) and understand key terminology.
  - I know how to use un-seen/scene-setting info (provided during the exam), onscreen scratch pad/calculator, tables and formulae during the exam.
- 4. Pre-seen materials** – I understand that I will be provided with an immersive scenario to prepare and to provide a context for the tasks in the examination; to do this, I need specific skills to assist in analysing the pre-seen materials.
  - I know that I need to remember the 'key themes' about the scenario so that I may understand un-seen materials and task requirements in the exam.
  - I can do a SWOT analysis, identify key issues and risks to the organisation in the scenario.

- 5. Marking and scoring** – I understand that examination tasks will be practical and applied, not theoretical or academic. Hence, to be successful, I will have to perform the core activities in the same way, and to the same standards, that would be valid and valued in the workplace. To prepare for this:
- I can use a methodical approach to determine relevant facts, to provide solutions to unstructured problems, generate logical conclusions and persuasive recommendations.
  - I can use the Examiner's Reports and Mark Schemes as useful resources to help me to understand examiner expectations, common exam mistakes made by candidates and how marks are allocated.
- 6. Exam practice** – I understand that pre-seen materials and exam variants for past CS Exams (found in the CIMA Planner) have been written by the examiners and have subsequently gone through a rigorous QA process. Hence, these are the best resources for exam practice and will help me to improve all skills needed to pass my CS Exam the first time.
- In my study plan, I have allocated time to analyse at least three pre-seens from past CS Exams to improve my pre-seen analysis skills.
  - I have arranged to produce timed answers for at least two variants connected to each of the past CS Exam pre-seens I analysed.
- 7. An answer with a passing score** – I understand that answers for the CS Exams will have to demonstrate the key features that are common for any written examination, these are what it takes to pass the CS Exam and how I may score maximum potential marks. To prepare for this:
- I can practice identifying and interpreting the separate components/requirements of an exam task, that are normally given in conversational language.
  - I can self-assess whether my answer is a 'good answer' using the 'Performance Descriptors' and I can identify areas for improvement and interpret the grading scheme.
- 8. Exam preparation and support** – I understand how to best prepare for a Case Study exam, the resources available, study options and preparation time required. I recognise the learning style that suits me best. I know how to find registered tuition providers on CIMA's *Find a Tuition Provider Directory* and can research all the different delivery methods. I am confident:
- I have got enough study time to complete all tasks in my study plan and mock exams before the exam I have booked.
  - I have joined the CIMA Facebook group to connect with other studiers. I have got 'study-buddies' and arranged with them to exchange 'study-help'.
- 9. Exam techniques** – I understand exam techniques, best practices, time management strategies and the importance of communication and presentation skills for the exam, and how to improve those skills. To be exam ready:
- I can type at least 20 words per minute (on average) and produce answers to practice tasks and handle different answer formats.
  - I can manage time constraints and apply techniques in a situation similar to the real exam.
- 10. Exam booking** – I know what needs to be in place before booking an Online CIMA Examination.
- I have a quiet/private location at home or work to take the exam, a reliable computer with a webcam and a microphone, a strong internet connection and a reliable power supply.
  - I know how to run a system test and understand that I should book my Online CIMA Exam only if the system passes the test.

## Pre-seen Analysis and Mock Exams

If you have worked through the 10-point checklist actions above, you should feel confident that you have developed the skills necessary to analyse the pre-seen and practice mock exams meaningfully.

**When I read the pre-seen for the first time, I identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the organisation in the scenario. In my second reading, I begin to consider 'why I think' they are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Then:**

- I can prepare a detailed SWOT analysis, with reasoning.
- I can analyse and discuss the industry and its competitors.
- I can identify key issues (business, ethical, financial and performance) and evaluate risks facing the organisation and foresee new scenarios and challenges.
- I understand my role/persona and can apply my role within the organisation and understand my relationship to other stakeholders.

**Having analysed and identified the key themes in the pre-seen, I was able to reflect on them in order to take appropriate actions arising from the pre-seen scenario.**

**This means:**

- I can apply the right tools, models and frameworks to deepen my understanding of the organisation in the pre-seen scenario.
- I can, based on my analysis of the pre-seen, go back and refresh my knowledge of key competencies, tools or techniques.
- I can apply research skills to further my understanding of the case using resources outside the pre-seen.
- I can generate potential questions based on the pre-seen and have thought about all the different angles the examiner might use to ask questions.

**I have practiced at least three mock exams produced by a CIMA Registered Tuition Provider. I was honest with myself and did all mock exams to time and without using resources that wouldn't be available to me in the exam.**

### *A few tips for self-evaluation*

- *Timing and planning – Did you finish too early? Did you overrun? Did you waffle?*
  - *Content – Did you struggle with interpreting the questions, understanding the subject or (remembering and) recalling the notes?*
  - *Answer layout – Was your answer difficult to follow? Did you fail to address each sub-task? Were your workings/sentences unclear?*
- I can analyse and synthesise both information in the pre-seen and new data provided during the exam simulation.
  - I can apply and demonstrate the relevant knowledge and competencies at an appropriate level in a work-based scenario (as per the Performance Descriptors).
  - I can draw conclusions and articulate recommendations supported by information (and/or appropriate, simple calculations).
  - I can use feedback and learnings from mock exams to focus on the last phase of my preparation for the exam.

## All the best for your CIMA CS Examination.