

How to produce the Case Study answer 'examiners love to see'

CIMA[®] Case Study Examinations are designed to test what you can do, and not just what you know. Therefore, you should be able to integrate the technical knowledge you have acquired from three Objective Test subjects and apply them to the business and scenario provided.

In this video, you will find important information covering five key areas that will be helpful to produce a Case Study Examination answer examiners love to see. As a result, after watching this video, you will be able to:

- Understand what examiners look for in Case Study Examination answers
- Identify essential information helpful in producing a good answer
- Develop key examination skills through question practice

1. An Answer 'Examiners Love to See': What Does it Look Like? [watch from 02:12]

The first requisite of a good answer is that the candidate has answered all the question requirements. When it comes to the content of the answer, it should be logical and coherent, demonstrating an understanding of theories, and they are applied well to a specific problem or the issue. A good answer is one that is also well presented – it must conform to the format required and in the business style, tone and language.

'Candidates should demonstrate good technical understanding of the topic being tested, through clear and comprehensive explanation and apply this technical understanding to the business and the particular scenario within the task.'

– Examiner

2. Top 5 Things You Need to Know To Produce a Good Answer [watch from 06:00]

To produce an answer that the examiners love to see, there are few basic things you must be aware of and be familiar with.

One: Understand the examiner expectations at each level through the **Role Simulation** or the Persona within the [Examination Blueprints](#). The simulation is made up of three broad parts, namely the role of finance, the role simulated, and the job tasks simulated. The simulation will require candidates to demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge, skills and mindset of the CIMA finance professional along with an appreciation of the impact of the features of the simulation such as the context, organisational structures, environment and ecosystem within which the organisation operates. [\[watch from 06:12\]](#)

Two: The CIMA Case Study Examinations are capstone examinations designed to demonstrate mastery of previously acquired knowledge, skills and techniques and the drawing together of these to provide solutions to unstructured problems. Therefore, the key to achieving a passing score is to ensure that you have the technical knowledge and understanding of all of the syllabus topics included in each of the core activities. The Case Study [Examination blueprint](#) articulates the synoptic relationships across the three pillars for the level. Its 'core activities' are integrated and multidisciplinary. To produce an answer an examiner loves to see, you must be able to demonstrate the **core activities and assessment outcomes** in the Case Study Examination blueprint applicable to the level of your examination. [\[watch from 08:40\]](#)

Three: The third important resource that would help you produce an answer an examiner loves to see is the **Performance Descriptors**, which are published for each case study examination. In your examination, if you have not reached the passing standard for one or more core activities, the performance descriptor provides guidance on the minimum level of performance you will need to achieve to meet the passing standard and will help guide further study.

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Therefore, when preparing for the examination, you can use these performance descriptors to self-assess and benchmark your performance so that you may see what you need to achieve to become 'examination ready'.

[\[watch from 12:12\]](#)

CIMA publishes a very comprehensive Examiner's Report for each level and you may read it in the CIMA Planner under the "full post exam support materials". In every examiners report, you will find very useful information directly from the examiner. They include, the main focus for each of the exam variant, the examiners' observations and feedback for each task for all exam variants, common mistakes made by the candidates, and more importantly their tips and advice for future candidates. [\[watch from 13:50\]](#)

Five: In your case study examination, you may be asked to produce an answer using various formats, such as report, email, briefing note, memo or a discussion paper. Therefore, be familiar with different answer formats you may be required to use. [\[watch from 15:08\]](#)

3. Question Practice: When to Start? What are the Best Practices? [\[watch from 16:34\]](#)

Question practice is the single best examination preparation tactic through which you can develop the examination skills needed to produce an answer the examiner would love to see. All past Case Study Examinations materials have gone through a rigorous QA process and written by the same examiner of your examination. Therefore, there are no other materials better than the past Case Study Examinations materials for you to acquire and improve your examination skills.

'Practise tasks from past case studies and reflect on whether your answers are full and relevant. Take the time to type or write full answers.'

— Examiner

Remember, 80% impact on your examination success can be attributed to what you do before you get to the pre-seen of the examination you have booked. The most useful examination preparation can be done with past Case Study Examinations materials even before you get to the pre-seen of the examination you have booked to take. There is a detailed *Case Study Examinations Readiness Checklist* that will guide you through all the necessary steps and actions you may take to prepare well for your Case Study Examinations – use this checklist as the basis in preparing your study and revision timetable.

4. Critical Success Factors of a Good Case Study Examination Answer [\[watch from 25:34\]](#)

Three factors are critically important in producing a Case Study Examination answer the examiners love to see. There are plenty of resources in the [CIMA Planner](#) about these three critical success factors.

CSF 1: Analysis of pre-seen [\[watch from 26:07\]](#)

You are not expected to remember all that is in the pre-seen. Instead, remembering the key themes of the pre-seen will be enough. Therefore, instead of just reading the pre-seen a couple of times while underlining and annotating, you should smartly read the pre-seen and analyse it.

'To produce a good Case Study Examination answer, you must have analyzed the pre-seen material in depth. Ensure that you are very familiar with the business, especially the financial information, before the examination as this will help you with applying your knowledge and will save you time.'

— Examiner

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CSF 2: Understand question requirement [watch from 28:42]

That enables you to do exactly what examiners have asked. Examiners and markers have reported they observe many examples where candidates answered the task that they had prepared for and wished they had been asked, rather than what they were asked.

'As always, the key to achieving a passing mark or better was to answer the question as set. Higher marks were awarded to fuller answers that were relevant and correct.'

– Examiner

CSF 3: Planning the answer [watch from 31:44]

'It is important to take time to plan your answer so that you are able to apply your knowledge to the specifics of the case. I suggest that for certain tasks you plan your answers in the answer screen itself.'

– Examiner

We recommend that you should allocate first 1/3rd of the time allowed for a question to think and plan the answer. By any means, it's not a waste of time at all. Instead, it improves the quality of your answer.

5. How Your Answer is Marked? [watch from 34:57]

The nature of the case study examination tasks means that a range of responses will be valid. CIMA® uses levels-based marking scheme and the descriptors within it are holistic. This means markers read your answer in full. Then they select the most relevant level to the answer, out of the 3 levels, using a best-fit approach.

6. Few Hints and Tips for Question Practice [watch from 38:30]

- Think about your audience. Is it for the Board of Directors, employees at a similar level to you or an external party?
- Why are you writing the report? What is the purpose of the report? Have you been asked to present some information and/or data, do you need to recommend how to resolve an issue?
- While you are producing the answer, keep reminding yourself about the purpose and the audience – don't get bogged down in detail that is not relevant.

