BCS The Chartered Institute for IT

Guidelines for Candidates taking the BA and SD Oral Exams

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1.   Introduction

The Business Analysis (BA) and Solution Development (SD) oral examinations are the final element of the programme leading to the BCS International Diploma Certification.

The examination may be taken by you when you have passed four written examinations:

- one examination for each of the two core certificate modules;
- one examination for a module selected from the set of knowledge-based specialist certificate modules;
- one examination for a module selected from the set of practitioner specialist certificate modules.

Please note you will not be able to book an examination unless you have passed all the required modules.

It is recommended that you sit the oral examination within twelve months of completing the pre-requisite modules.

2.   Attending the oral examination

You will receive an email prior to your oral examination. It is important that you bring suitable photographic identification to the oral examination to identify yourself as the correct person. A driving licence, passport and named work ID badges are all acceptable. For further information, please refer to the Identification Policy which can be found on the BCS Website.

Please ensure you arrive at least 15 minutes before your examination as this helps to keep the examination schedule running smoothly.

You should consider the oral examination a business interview and dress accordingly. Part of the oral examination considers your professionalism and ability to work with staff at all levels in an organisation. Accordingly, your ability to communicate effectively is also considered.

Please note that sometimes delays occur during the oral examination session therefore your examination may begin later than the scheduled start time. It is advisable to consider this when making travel arrangements.

Please note that any mobile devices should be switched off and not in view for the duration of the examination.

3.   Preparing for the Oral Examination

The oral examination is based upon the latest syllabus. The syllabus sets out the topic areas that may be covered in the oral examination. It is your responsibility to prepare for the oral examination and to ensure that you have enough knowledge of the topics in the syllabus.

Although the Oral Examination Preparation Days, offered by Accredited Training Providers are not mandatory it is strongly recommended that you attend one so that you get a better understanding of what the actual oral examination will be like. It will also help you understand the rationale of the oral examiner's questioning.

Please note that the oral examination may contain subjects you have not encountered during your previous study; the oral examiners may examine you on these topics in the oral examination. A reading list is included within the Oral Examination Syllabus which can be downloaded here should you require any sources for additional study.

4.   Bloom's Taxonomy

Each section of the syllabus is allocated a Knowledge (K) level. These are based on Bloom's taxonomy of knowledge in the cognitive domain and can be broadly interpreted as follows:

K1 – Remember	K4 – Analyse
K2 – Understand	K5 – Synthesise
K3 – Apply	K6 – Evaluate

The Knowledge Levels are explained in greater detail in the relevant syllabus.

5.   Format and content of the oral examination

The oral examination will last for up to 50 minutes and will be conducted by two examiners.

The oral examination will follow a standard for format:

- they will introduce themselves and ask you to do the same;
- one will check your ID;
- they will start asking you about your experience;
- the first examiner will ask you questions; this should last approximately 25 minutes;
- the second examiner will ask you; this should last approximately 25 minutes;
- the oral examination will finish.

The oral examiners will ask questions based upon the topics listed in the oral examination syllabus.

Please note that the oral examiners will not know whether you have previously sat the oral examination.

6.   The Nature of the Questions

The questions asked by the oral examiner will require you to discuss and apply the topics in the oral examination syllabus. They may require you to demonstrate knowledge of a specific subject area, or to apply knowledge to a given scenario. The questioning may cover a topic in overview or may require more detailed knowledge. The questions are designed to explore the interconnections between the different subjects and to examine your ability to apply techniques or combinations of techniques to different situations.

The examiners are looking for you to demonstrate the following aspects of performance:

- knowledge of the key principles and content of the subjects in the syllabus;
- the part each of the techniques and concepts plays;
- how you might apply the techniques and concepts in the workplace;
- the purpose of the techniques and concepts.

While you may be involved in using some of the techniques in the workplace, you should avoid turning every question into a description of your own organisation. It is important that you demonstrate an ability to take a broader perspective regarding the techniques and concepts. The examiners will be looking for this broader perspective when considering your responses to their questions.

7.   Techniques – SD Only

As part of your written examinations you will have covered a specific systems development life cycle approach (e.g. waterfall or agile) and the specific techniques that may support the chosen life cycle approach (e.g. Structured or object oriented). The oral examiners may ask you which approach and techniques you have selected and may adapt their questions accordingly

8.   Techniques – BA and SD

You will not be asked to draw any models relating to a case study scenario, but you may be asked for your opinion of their usefulness and relevance. You will be expected to understand how the range of techniques relevant to the Diploma may be used, when you would use them and how they could help you

9. Assessment

The examiners will assess your performance in each section of the oral examination syllabus. They also include assessment of your competence in logical reasoning, communication and professionalism. The oral examiners comment on any specific areas of weakness demonstrated by candidates who fail the oral examination.

10. Notification of Oral Examination Results

You will be notified of your result within two weeks of the date of the interview. The examiners will not issue verbal results on the day of the oral examination. If you fail the oral examination, you will be given brief feedback on the areas of weakness.

11. Conclusion

The oral examination is an assessment of your suitability to work as a Business Analyst or part of a System Development Team. The award of the Diploma signifies that you have successfully demonstrated the ability to conduct Business Analysis/Systems Development work. The Diploma is intended to prove an employer with an assurance that an individual will be able to work successfully, albeit with some supervision in the role of a Business Analyst/Solution Development position.