



Exam strategies for CIMA papers

Paper E1 - Enterprise Operations & Paper P1 - Performance Operations

Assessment strategy

There will be a written examination paper of three hours, plus 20 minutes of pre-examination question paper reading time. During the 20 minutes you can: read the question paper and annotate or highlight the question paper. However you will not be allowed to: open the answer book; write in the answer book; add any loose sheets/supplements to your answer book; or use calculators. Failure to comply with these rules will be considered as a serious breach of the exam regulations.

The examination paper will have the following sections:

Section A	20 marks	A variety of compulsory objective test questions, each worth between two and four marks. Mini scenarios may be given, to which a group of questions relate.
Section B	30 marks	Six compulsory short answer questions, each worth five marks. A short scenario may be given, to which some or all questions relate.
Section C	50 marks	One or two compulsory questions. Short scenarios may be given, to which questions relate.

Exam Strategy

Complete ALL objective test questions within section A **within your 20 minute official reading time allowed before the exam starts.**

- Allow 10 minutes to write out your answers from Section A on to the solution sheet when the three hour exam begins.
- Allow 60 minutes to complete the six short answer questions within section B each worth 5 marks each. (Allow 10 minutes per requirement). Post exam guidance indicates ½ to 1 mark for each relevant issue for many of these requirements, therefore it is imperative that your answers are diverse e.g. lots of breadth or range of answers rather than huge discussion of a limited range of answers.

- Allow 1 hour and 45 minutes (the remaining time you have) to complete section C.
- This will allow 5 minutes left to review your solutions at the end.

Question requirements

- Read them carefully
- Break down each requirement into headings and include and underline these headings within your answer sheet
- Examine any information in the scenario for the question (if provided) constantly to generate ideas to meet the requirements
- Ensure you deal with all aspects to a question requirement
- Always write a brief conclusion (sometimes additional marks are included in the post exam guide if a candidate has does this)

Question presentation

- Page clearly labelled as to what part of the question you are completing
 - Start a fresh page for every part to a question.
 - Watch for -write a report or memo etcø
 - Let the question requirement drive your headings
 - Write in brief explanations 5-6 lines then a gap or -white spaceøevery 5-6 lines
 - Diagrams should be neat and spacious about 1/3 page in size
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Paper F1 - Financial Operations

Assessment Strategy

There will be a written examination paper of three hours, plus 20 minutes of pre-examination question paper reading time. The examination paper will have the following sections:

Section A	20 marks	A variety of compulsory objective test questions, each worth between two and four marks. Mini scenarios may be given, to which a group of questions relate.
Section B	30 marks	Six compulsory short answer questions, each worth 5 marks. A short scenario may be given, to which some or all questions relate.
Section C	50 marks	One or two compulsory questions. Short scenarios may be given, to which questions relate.

Exam Strategy

I would recommend that you start doing the objective test questions in section A in your 20 minutes reading time. Do as many of section A questions within the 20 minutes reading time. Any calculation questions leave until the reading time is over and you can start using your calculators.

Once the reading time is up you should spend a further 30 minutes on completing section A.

Then start on section B questions. There will be six short questions to do and all are compulsory. You should spend around 1 hour only on this section.

- Start a new page for each of the questions.
- Layout your answers neatly and show all your workings.
- Discussion answers must be broken down into small paragraphs with a space after each relevant point.
- With accounting standard questions, make sure you identify the relevant accounting standard, describe it and then relate it to the scenario. This will maximise your marks.

- Where questions require the use of a formula, write out the formula first and then insert the figures.

With section C there is one or two compulsory question. Here you may be asked to produce the financial statements - the income statement, statement of financial position and cash flow statement. You should spend around 1.5 hours on section C.

- Make sure you adopt the step by step technique for preparing the income statement, statement of financial position and cash flow statement questions.
 - Make sure you adopt the 7 stepped approach to consolidation questions.
 - Have a separate page for each financial statement and layout them out neatly with plenty of spacing.
 - Show all your workings on a separate workings page and write out all your journals and your assumptions. This will give you marks.
 - Your statement of financial position may not balance or your cash flow statement may not reconcile. This is quite normal under exam conditions. Don't worry about it and don't spend too much time on trying to figure out where you went wrong. Just move on to the next part.
 - If you get stuck on a certain part of the question, don't spend too long on that part. Every exam questions will have an aspect that you are not 100% sure on. Just try your best and move on. The difficult part will only carry a few marks, so it won't matter if you get it wrong.
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Paper E2 - Enterprise Management

Assessment strategy

There will be a written examination paper of three hours, plus 20 minutes of pre-examination question paper reading time. During the 20 minutes you can: read the question paper and annotate or highlight the question paper. However you will not be allowed to: open the answer book; write in the answer book; add any loose sheets/supplements to your answer book; or use calculators. Failure to comply with these rules will be considered as a serious breach of the exam regulations.

The examination paper will have the following sections:

Section A	50 marks	Five compulsory medium answer questions, each worth ten marks. Short scenarios may be given, to which some or all questions relate.
Section B	50 marks	One or two compulsory questions. Short scenarios may be given, to which questions relate.

Exam Strategy

Within your 20 minutes of official reading time allowed before the exam starts, read through all requirements and information carefully. You can write on the exam paper during this time so produce brief outline answer plans and highlight key requirements and scenario information.

- Allow 15 minutes per question for the five compulsory questions within section A (total time 1 hour and 15 minutes).
- Allow 1 hour and 45 minutes (the remaining time you have) to complete section B.

Question requirements

- Read them carefully
- Break down each requirement into headings and include and underline these headings within your answer sheet
- Examine any information in the scenario for the question (if provided) constantly to generate ideas to meet the requirements

- Ensure you deal with all aspects to a question requirement
- Always write a brief conclusion (sometimes additional marks are included in the post exam guide if a candidate has does this)

Question presentation

- Page clearly labelled as to what part of the question you are completing
 - Start a fresh page for every part to a question.
 - Watch for ≠write a report or memo etc∅
 - Let the question requirement drive your headings
 - Write in brief explanations 5-6 lines then a gap or ≠white space∅every 5-6 lines
 - Diagrams should be neat and spacious about 1/3 page in size
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Paper P2 - Performance Management

Assessment strategy

There will be a written examination paper of three hours, plus 20 minutes of pre-examination question paper reading time. During the 20 minutes you can: read the question paper and annotate or highlight the question paper. However you will not be allowed to: open the answer book; write in the answer book; add any loose sheets/supplements to your answer book; or use calculators. Failure to comply with these rules will be considered as a serious breach of the exam regulations.

The examination paper will have the following sections:

Section A	50 marks	Five compulsory medium answer questions, each worth ten marks. Short scenarios may be given, to which some or all questions relate.
Section B	50 marks	One or two compulsory questions. Short scenarios may be given, to which questions relate.

Exam strategy

This exam is highly calculative and therefore time pressured and so you need to work quickly and efficiently. Extensive exam practice is paramount and essential before attempting this paper. To make things more manageable for you and maximize your marks, you should use good formats, layouts and supporting workings for questions which ask you to produce long calculations.

I would recommend that you start doing the questions in section A in your 20 minutes reading time. Do as many of section A questions within the 20 minutes reading time. Any calculation questions leave until the reading time is over and you can start using your calculators.

Then if you have any time left go on to section B and read through the questions. Briefly annotate answers on to question paper for written sections.

Once the reading time is up you should go on to complete section A in the allowed time of 60 minutes. Do not get bogged down in questions that you are struggling to complete, instead highlight these and come back to them at the end.

Ensure you include workings to the questions in section A, as these carry marks.

With section B you usually have two compulsory questions of equal marks. Select the question that you are most comfortable with and complete in 30 minutes and then do the same with the second question.

Question requirements and presentation

- Start a new page for each of the questions.
 - Layout your answers neatly and show all your workings.
 - Discussion answers must be broken down into small paragraphs with a space after each relevant point.
 - Make sure you present your answer in the format that is requested, e.g. report format.
 - Where questions require the use of a formula, write out the formula first and then insert the figures.
 - Make sure you read all the requirements before attempting the question.
 - Let the question requirement drive your headings.
 - Examine any information in the scenario (if provided) constantly to generate ideas.
 - Ensure you deal with all aspects to a question requirement, reread the question two or three times to ensure you have fully understood it.
 - Have a separate page for your workings and make sure your final answer makes reference to these.
 - If you get stuck on a certain part of the question, don't spend too long on that part. Every exam question will have an aspect that you are not 100% sure on. Just try your best and move on. The difficult part will only carry a few marks, so it won't matter if you get it wrong.
 - Discussion answers in section C will need to be in depth and you need to ensure that you relate it to the scenario to maximise your marks.
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Paper F2 - Financial Management

Assessment Strategy

There will be a written examination paper of three hours, plus 20 minutes of pre-examination question paper reading time. The examination paper will have the following sections:

Section A	50 marks	Five compulsory medium answer questions, each worth ten marks. Short scenarios may be given, to which some or all questions relate.
Section B	50 marks	One or two compulsory questions. Short scenarios may be given, to which questions relate.

Dealing with consolidation questions

It is imperative that you follow the step by step technique when dealing with consolidation questions.

There will always be item/s that you will not be sure how to deal with. This is normal and you just have to move on if you get stuck. This is where the step by step technique will be your saviour.

My 7 stepped approach to consolidated income statement and statement of financial position is as follows:

- 1 Determine group structure (very important)
- 2 Layout pro-forma consolidated financial statement (use whole A4 side with plenty of space)
- 3 Consider all the adjustments (go through the notes systematically)
- 4 Calculate the goodwill (use pro-forma)
- 5 Combine the financial statements
- 6 Calculate non controlling interest / Minority Interest
- 7 Prove the consolidated reserves

Ensure that you know your pro-formaø for:

- Goodwill calculation
- Non controlling interest / Minority Interest
- Consolidated reserves
- Investment in associate undertaking
- Disposal
- Exchange differences on overseas subsidiaries
- Cash flow calculations for the consolidated cash flow statement

Show all your workings

This is the only way you will pass the question. Show all the figures, journal adjustments and your thought process.

Dealing with financial analysis questions

If you are comfortable with calculating ratios and good with discussions, you should score highly in this area.

- Report format is normally required
- Show your ratio calculation in an appendix
- Ensure you calculate a rang of relevant ratios in relation to performance, position and prospect (3 Pø)
- Discussions should be in depth with good explanations and reasons (use your imagination!!)
- Make sure that you can explain the ratios and discuss how they are affected by various changes in accounting policies.
- Learn the limitations of ratio analysis and creative accounting.
- Relate your discussions to the scenario (takeover, comparing against competitors etc)

Dealing with accounting standard questions

This is the hardest part of the paper in my opinion. Accounting standard questions require complete knowledge and you canø guess the treatment.

At this level you will be faced with complex transactions. The requirement will be to show how the transaction will be recorded in the financial statements and which accounting standard is applicable.

To maximise the marks in this area do the following:

- 1 Identify the relevant accounting standard/s.
- 2 Explain the accounting standard/s in as much depth as possible.
- 3 Apply the accounting standard/s to the question.
- 4 Give correct journal entries where necessary.

The common accounting standards examined are:

- Financial instruments (IAS 32 & 39)
- Pensions (IAS 19)
- Reporting substance over legal form (sale & repurchase, sale & leaseback)
- Revenue recognition (IAS 18)
- Share based payments (IFRS 2)
- Hyperinflation (IAS 29)

This is not the complete list and you need to ensure that you read your CIMA student magazine to keep up to date with accounting standards.

Paper E3 - Enterprise Strategy & Paper P3 - Performance Strategy

Assessment strategy

There will be a written examination paper of three hours, plus 20 minutes of pre-examination question paper reading time. During the 20 minutes you can: read the question paper and annotate or highlight the question paper. However you will not be allowed to: open the answer book; write in the answer book; add any loose sheets/supplements to your answer book; or use calculators. Failure to comply with these rules will be considered as a serious breach of the exam regulations.

The examination paper will have the following sections:

Section A	50 marks	A maximum of four compulsory questions, all relating to a pre-seen case study and further new unseen case material provided in the examination. (Note: The pre-seen case study is common to all three of the strategic level papers at each examination sitting i.e. Paper E3, P3 and F3).
Section B	50 marks	Two questions, from a choice of three, each worth twenty five marks. Short scenarios will be given, to which some or all questions relate.

Exam Strategy

Within your 20 minutes of official reading time allowed before the exam starts, read through all requirements and information carefully. You can write on the exam paper during this time so produce brief outline answer plans and highlight key requirements and scenario information.

- Choose the two questions you will attempt from section B and carefully read all the requirements to ensure you can answer well these questions you do select.
- Timing 1 ½ hours on section A
- Timing 1 ½ hours on section B

The section B questions are not just 45 minutes of time per question attempted, you have to break down the 45 minutes of time allotted for each requirement before you begin. This ensures you don't run out of time and this same principle should also be applied to section A requirements.

Tackle all the easiest parts for numerical calculations and then attempt all the other aspects of the requirement in the time you have. Don't be afraid to stop calculating even though your answer is not complete, otherwise over running can prejudice other marks due to inadequate time.

Question requirements

- Read them carefully
- Break down each requirement into headings and include and underline these headings within your answer sheet
- Examine any information in the scenario for the question (if provided) constantly to generate ideas to meet the requirements
- Ensure you deal with all aspects to a question requirement
- Always write a brief conclusion (sometimes additional marks are included in the post exam guide if a candidate has done this)

Question presentation

- Page clearly labelled as to what part of the question you are completing
 - Start a fresh page for every part to a question.
 - Watch for 'write a report or memo etc'
 - Let the question requirement drive your headings
 - Write in brief explanations 5-6 lines then a gap or 'white space' every 5-6 lines
 - Diagrams should be neat and spacious about 1/3 page in size
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Paper F3 - Financial Strategy

Assessment Strategy

There will be a written examination paper of three hours, plus 20 minutes of pre-examination question paper reading time. The examination paper will have the following sections:

Section A	50 marks	A maximum of four compulsory questions, totaling fifty marks, all relating to a pre-seen case study and further new un-seen case material provided within the examination. (Note: The pre-seen case study is common to all three of the strategic level papers at each examination sitting i.e. Paper P3, E3 and F3).
Section B	50 marks	Two questions, from a choice of three, each worth twenty five marks. Short scenarios will be given, to which some or all questions relate.

Exam strategy

Time allocation

- 20 minutes official reading time to read, highlight information and requirements and select the order in which you will complete your questions. Choose the two questions you will attempt from section B and carefully read all the requirements to ensure you can answer well these questions you do select.
- Timing 1 ½ hours on section A
- Timing 1 ½ hours on section B

The section B questions are not just 45 minutes of time per question attempted, you have to break down the 45 minutes of time allotted for each requirement before you begin. This ensures you don't run out of time and this same principle should also be applied to section A requirements.

Tackle all the easiest parts for numerical calculations and then attempt all the other aspects of the requirement in the time you have. Don't be afraid to stop calculating even though your answer is not complete, otherwise over running can prejudice other marks due to inadequate time.

Question requirements

- Read them carefully
- Break down each requirement into headings and include such headings within your answer sheet
- Examine any information in the scenario (if provided) constantly to generate ideas
- Ensure you deal with all aspects to a question requirement
- Always write a brief conclusion

Answer presentation

- Page clearly labelled as to what part of the question you are completing
- Start a fresh page for every part to a question.
- Watch for ≠write a report or memo etcø
- Let the question requirement drive your headings
- Write in brief explanations 5-6 lines then a gap or ≠white spaceøevery 5-6 lines

Models, theories and ratios

- Whenever you use any formula or ratio, ensure you write out the formula first and then hunt for the figures.
- Sometimes you may not have all the figures available to complete the calculation. In this case you need to just make an assumption and progress with the calculation.
- Always discuss the limitations of using ratios
- Always discuss the assumptions and limitations of using models and theories (CAPM, dividend valuation model, Modigliani and Miller theories etc)

Discussions

- This is the area where you need to spend a lot of time on.
 - (i) Make the relevant point,
 - (ii) Explain that point in as much detail as possible
 - (iii) Relate to the scenario
 - (iv) Give your recommendation where required.

This will maximise your marks. Detail on discussion and broadness will help you to pass this paper.
