

**THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA
DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRICAL AND COMPUTER ENGINEERING**

**FINAL EXAMINATION 2010/2011
BACHELOR OF SOFTWARE ENGINEERING**



ECJ 4160 Communication Skills for Engineers

Date: 20th March 2011

Time: 9.30 – 12.30 hrs

Answer ALL questions:

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 5 should be answered on the question paper itself. Use other paper to answer questions 4 and 6.

Question 1

Fill in each gap of the following passage with the correct word from the set of words given within each bracket.

Meetings are part of almost all jobs. They (1) (give, provide) a platform for people in a company to meet, discuss and (2) (use, take) collective decisions. There (3) (is, are) several reasons why meetings are (4) (held, made). For one, more information (5) (is, are) available. For another, different ideas can be (6) (achieved, contributed). In addition, more informed decisions can be (7) (reached, taken) while all participants are more (8) (committed, accepted) to the decisions reached.

The way a meeting (9) (operates, conducts) depends on the person who guides and (10) (participates, manages) the proceedings. He or she can (11) (run, accept) the proceedings very strictly or (12) (give, let) everyone speak whenever they want. Therefore directing a meeting (13) (needs, meets) flexibility. Once the meeting is (14) (reached, concluded) it is necessary to have a (15) (record, form) of the proceedings.

(15 marks)

Question 2

Complete the following text by filling in the blanks with the correct form of the verbs given within brackets.

For many years, researchers have drawn attention to the importance of alignment between business and IT. In early studies, this often (1) (mean) linking the business plan and the IT plan. Another perspective (2) (involve) ensuring similarity between the business strategy and the IT strategy. Yet another (3) (require) examining the fit between business needs and information system priorities. These conceptualizations (4) (expand) over time and now research (5) (recognize) many points of alignment between business and IT.

Early motivation for IT (6) (emerge) from a focus on strategic business planning and long-range IT planning in the early 1980s. From a business perspective, planning (7) (characterize) as a top-down and bottom-up process, and IT plans (8) (create) in support of corporate strategies. From an IT perspective, decisions on hardware and software (9) (have) such long-term implications that tying them to current and future plans of the organizational unit (10) (be) a practical necessity.

(10 marks)

Question 3

Fill in the gaps of the following text with suitable words.

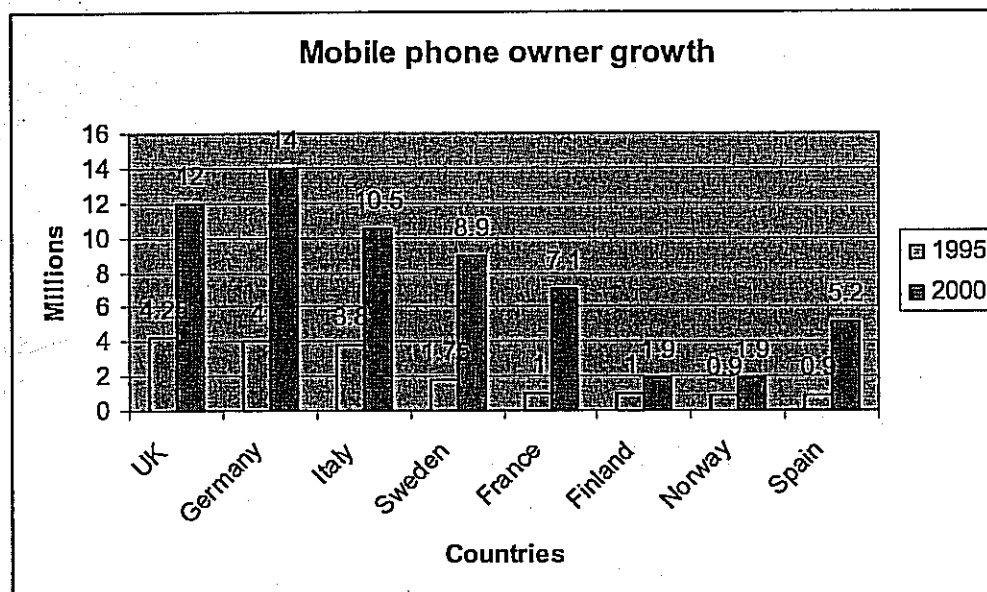
(15 marks)

An interview is not merely spending time in the interviewer's office. It's important to anticipate the (1) that may be asked during the (2) so that you are prepared to (3) them convincingly. To be (4) , you should know about the (5) and be able to explain the (6) of your CV fully.

Learn to be specific and (7) vague answers such as, "I (8) for this job because I like people." If (9) job requires public relations (10) , you should be able to relate (11) own skills, past experience (12) any, and qualifications to the (13) to serve customers. It (14) possible only a few questions you (15) for may be asked; the preparation nevertheless will give you confidence which will be reflected in your behaviour during the interview.

Question 4

The following graph shows the growth of mobile phone owners in some European countries from 1995 to 2000.



Write a report of about 150 words using the information in the chart. Your report should

- Have a title
- Consist of at least 3 paragraphs with an introduction and a conclusion
- Compare and contrast the growth of mobile phone users in the countries illustrated in the chart

(20 marks)

Question 5

Read the following text and answer the questions.

The rapidly growing integration of economies and societies around the world has been one of the most **hotly debated** topics in international economies over the last few years. To be competitive in the 21st century, organizations must be able to provide cost-effective products and services while maintaining their level of quality, if not exceeding it. Hence, management of virtual products becomes a very important factor for the success of such ventures, as it enables project managers to assess and control projects from a distance.

Globalization has enabled rapid growth and poverty reduction in countries such as China and India among many other nations that were poor 20 years ago. But globalization has also generated significant international opposition because of concerns that it has increased inequality among nations and led to **environmental degradation**. The main opposition, however, has been to the sharp increase in project outsourcing, particularly in the United States. Organizations are moving many of their

production activities overseas, taking advantage of lower-cost labour markets, favourable taxation laws, and the availability of highly skilled professionals.

In the long run this trend will be beneficial to the world economy as a whole; an example is the outsourcing of blue-collar jobs in the United States, which has generated white-collar jobs. But to be successful these projects need to be well managed regardless of geographic distances, cultural diversity, and time zone limitations. By having electronic Project Management or ePM expertise, project managers will be equipped to deal with the unique challenges of managing virtual teams and handling cultural and political issues that often are unfamiliar.

According to the Project Management Institute (PMI), the average project tends to experience a 168 per cent cost over-run and only 22 per cent of such projects are successful – finished on time and under budget. Who is to blame? Certainly not the sponsors and project managers, for their decisions to push for cost-cutting measures are one of the main reasons given for outsourcing. Certainly not the fact that we do not have enough qualified professionals with the right expertise, in particular for information science/information technology (IS/IT) – oriented projects, which is another reason given for outsourcing.

The reasons for such discouraging statistics are many, and while globalization and outsourcing are at the core of most of these reasons, the lack of good measuring of project performance and results is at the core of the problem. According to Microsoft, more than 60 per cent of project managers are still using Lotus/Excel spreadsheets to manage and keep track of their projects. Although these applications do a great job in tracking results, they are a far cry from a minimum set of features project managers need to manage their projects.

1. What can organizations do to remain competitive in the current century?

(1 mark)

2. Why is virtual project management important to succeed in global business enterprises?

(1 mark)

3. What has made it possible for countries that were poor two decades ago to grow rapidly and reduce poverty?

(1 mark)

4. (i) Is the writer of the view that globalization has had no negative effects? Answer 'yes' or 'no'.

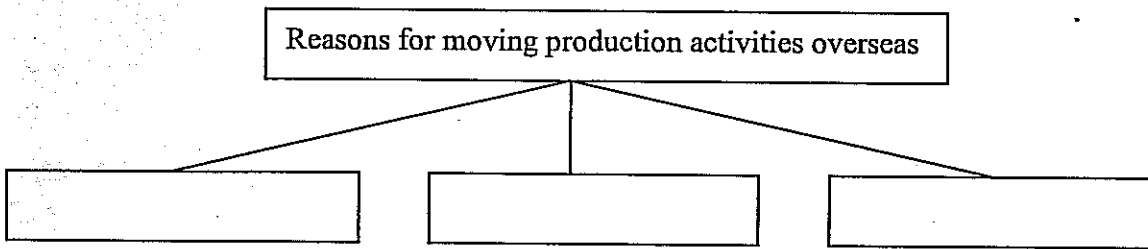
(ii) Give reasons for your answer.

(2 marks)

5. Which country has experienced the most opposition to globalization, and why?

(2 marks)

6. Complete the following diagram with information from the text.



(3 marks)

7. List 3 things project managers need to consider to ensure the success of a project.

- a)
- b)

(2 marks)

8. What are the benefits of having ePM expertise?

(2 marks)

9. Tick the correct statements.

- (i) PMI statistics reveal that not more than 22% of outsourced budgets have been successfully completed.
- (ii) The need for cost reduction has led companies to outsource projects.
- (iii) The lack of professionally qualified experts in information science and information technology has led to outsourcing.
- (iv) Lotus/Excel spreadsheets are popularly used in project management.

(4 marks)

10. (i) Would you agree that the failure for on time completion of projects is due to globalization and outsourcing? Answer 'yes' or 'no'.

(1 mark)

(ii) Support your answer with a statement from the text.

(1 mark)

11. What do these words/phrases mean as they appear in the text?

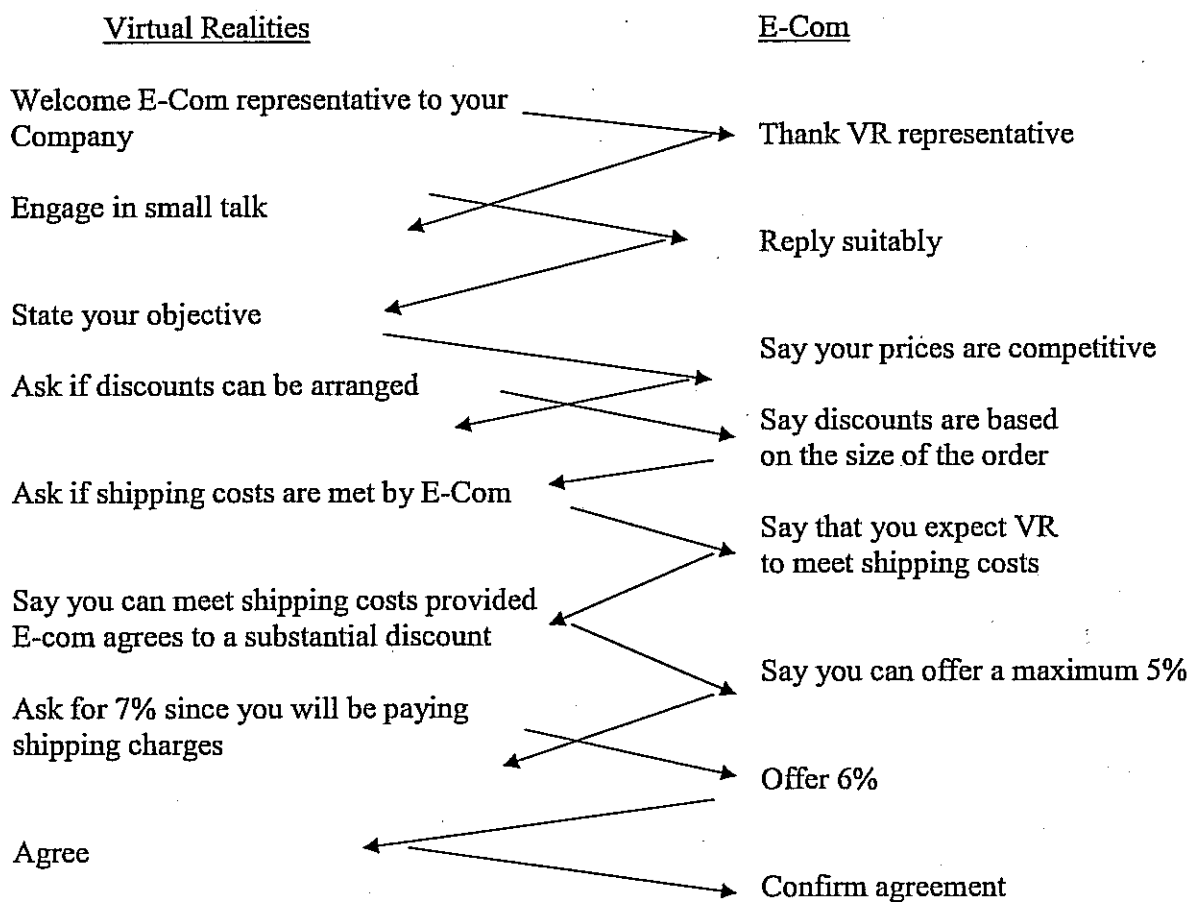
- a) hotly debated
- b) degradation
- c) diversity
- d) under budget
- e) far cry

(5 marks)

Question 6

You work for Virtual Realities and in a discussion with a representative of E-Com. The latter company, based overseas, is seeking a partner to promote its products in Sri Lanka. The meeting is a preliminary one and you have been tasked with discussing product discounts and shipping costs.

Construct a dialogue using the following flowchart.



(15 marks)