

Case Study

Operational Level

Study Text



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We are here to make a difference to the success of every learner.

Clarity, accessibility and ease of use for our learners are key to our approach.

We will use contemporary examples that are rich, engaging and representative of a diverse workplace.

We will include a representative mix of race and gender at the various levels of seniority within the businesses in our examples to support all our learners in aspiring to achieve their potential within their chosen careers.

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We will seek to devise simple measures that can be used by independent assessors to randomly check our success in the implementation of our Linguistic Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

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Introduction

Acknowledgements

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How to use the Materials



Test your understanding – Following key points and definitions are exercises which give the opportunity to assess the understanding of these core areas. Within the work book the answers to these sections are left blank, explanations to the questions can be found within the online version which can be hidden or shown on screen to enable repetition of activities.



Illustration – to help develop an understanding of topics and the test your understanding exercises the illustrative examples can be used.

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Exam Introduction

To complete CIMA®'s CGMA® qualification and be able to use the designatory letters of ACMA and CGMA, candidates for this prestigious award need to achieve three things:

- attain the entry requirements for the professional level qualification
- study for and complete the relevant professional level assessments and examinations
- complete three years of relevant practical experience.

This text concentrates on the second of these requirements, and in particular to study for and complete the Operational level case study exam.

Overview of exam

The case study exam will be available four times a year. The purpose of this exam is to consolidate learning at each level by reflecting real life work situations. The exam is human marked.

This approach allows a wide range of knowledge and skills to be tested including research and analysis, presentation of information and communication skills whilst still ensuring competence in key skills.

CIMA believe that this format will provide the commitment to delivering the competencies which employers desire thereby improving 'employability'.

For example, the Operational level case study exam will be set within a simulated business context, placing the candidate in the job role matched to the competency level. In the case of the Operational level, the job role is that of an entry level finance professional (usually a management accountant) with responsibility for some of the consequences of implementing strategy. The focus will be on the short-term.

Typical aspects of such a role could include the following:

- An understanding of costs and cost accounting, in order to start preparing budgets, and to advise about short-term changes in products, volume and prices.
- Putting budgets together for the business will require communicating aspects of the budget to non-finance staff; both in the preparation and the delivery.
- Preparation of financial reports to show how the business is performing. This will require knowledge of the regulatory environment, financial reporting, and business taxation.
- Analysing and advising on working capital, cash and short-term finance.

The exam is intended to replicate “a day in the life” of a finance professional operating at the operational level and provide a simulated environment for candidates to demonstrate the required level of proficiency in each of the competency areas. Consequently, the exam will be set and marked according to the weightings for each core activity at the level.

The case study exam is 3 hours in duration and is made up of a series of timed tests or tasks. This makes the case study exam different from most exams you will have sat to date – once you have submitted a particular task (or the time limit is reached, whichever is sooner) you will be moved on and will not be able to return to that task. This should reduce the problem of not completing the paper but does mean you will need to be very disciplined when attempting each task.

Candidates will be provided with access to pre-seen information approximately seven weeks before the real exam.

Assessment aims and strategy

The Case Study Examination tests the knowledge, skills and techniques from the three pillars within one simulated scenario and is taken at the end of each level of CIMA’s CGMA Professional Qualification. Candidates are given a fictional Case Study before the examination and are expected to give solutions to the situations and challenges presented within the examination – based on the knowledge and skills acquired from the three subjects. The Case Study mimics their role in a real-work scenario, at each level of the qualification.

The case study is three hours long. The case study will include both pre-seen and unseen material, the latter being made available during the examination. They will incorporate short written answers, emails, letters and any form of appropriate communication required within the tasks set.

In terms of CIMA’s CGMA hierarchy of verbs (see below), the focus for the Operational Case Study is mainly level 3 (application), with some analysis and evaluation (levels 4 and 5, respectively).

Simulated business issues in the case studies provide candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their familiarity with the context and interrelationships of the level’s technical content. This reflects the cross functional abilities required in the workplace. Skills will include research, analysis, and presentation of both financial and nonfinancial information and communication skills.

Feedback will be provided to candidates with their results. Exam sittings for the case studies will occur every three months. Candidates must have completed or be exempt from the three objective tests at a particular level before attempting the relevant case study.



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