

AB Study support guide

▪ Plan ▪ Prepare ▪ Pass

Accountant in Business (AB)

▪ Plan ▪ Prepare ▪ Pass

Welcome to your guide helping you to study for your Accountant in Business exam

Why use this guide?

- ✓ Structured approach to show you how to succeed
- ✓ Signposted resources and how to use them
- ✓ Tips for success to help you through your studies
- ✓ Interactive clickable checklists to keep you on track

This guide is applicable for exams from September 2018 to August 2019.

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Getting started

Your checklist

- Enter for your exam
- Buy an Approved Content Provider study text and question & answer bank
- Draw up your study plan
- Get to know your exam

Getting started – Tips for success

We strongly recommend that you buy an AB [Approved Content Provider](#) Study Text and Question and Answer Bank to ensure exam success. These provide:

- the most up to date content and syllabus coverage
- tests, quizzes and other support designed to help you prepare for your exam
- past exam questions updated for changes to the syllabus, question style and exam format as well as practice questions and answers and full mock exams to ensure you are fully prepared for your exam

You may want to consider attending a face to face or online tuition course with one of ACCA's [Approved Learning Partners](#) for all or part of your studies or signing up for [ACCA-X](#) for all or part of your learning.



Students who use approved content materials are more likely to pass than those who don't.



Tips for success

- ✓ In most places you can now take AB by our flexible on-demand CBEs. Search for a local [on-demand CBE centre](#) using our centre list and contact them directly to book your exam on a date that suits you.
- ✓ Use the [ACCA Learning Community](#) to link up with fellow students around the world studying the same exam as you – get tips, join discussions and share ideas and advice. You can also access live Q&A sessions and presentations.
- ✓ Spend some time familiarising yourself with the free resources available via the [exam resource finder](#) on the [student section](#) of the ACCA website – we will provide you with specific guidance on when and how to use these resources during the relevant stages of study.
- ✓ Remember to personalise your edition of [Student Accountant](#) so you receive AB specific information as you need it.
- ✓ If you think you could benefit from building your English language skills to help you succeed in your exam take a look at the [BPP English Language support for ACCA](#) which is a free online programme specifically designed to support you through your exams.

Getting started – Draw up your study plan

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 2	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 3	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 5	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 6	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 7	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 8	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 9	REVISION						
Week 10	REVISION						
Week 11	REVISION						
Week 12	REVISION AND FINAL PREPARATION						

Evening study period
 Daytime study period
 Other commitments

Study plan checklist

- Calculate the number of weeks from now until your exam date and draw up a plan – see the example to the left and a possible proforma for you to use on page 7
- You may need to add or take away weeks depending on your own circumstances
- Block out days/half days/evenings already committed to family/social events
- Plan study periods – evenings/half days/full days, aiming for roughly one evening/half day per chapter of your study text
- If possible leave a four week period for the revision and final preparation phases

Getting started – Draw up your study plan



Tips for success

When drawing up your study plan

- ✓ Be realistic and consider when you are best able to study – maybe early mornings work better for you or perhaps shorter study periods more often.
- ✓ Once you have prepared your plan stick to it!
- ✓ Consider building in an extra study period after every few chapters to review and consolidate your learning.
- ✓ Take a 5 – 10 minute break every hour to help maintain your motivation and concentration.
- ✓ Use this plan whether you intend to self-study through all the phases or mix with some tuition from [Approved Learning Partner](#).



Students who use ACCA's learning support resources achieve higher pass rates than those who don't.

Getting started – Your study plan

Print out and write down when you will study, relax and revise!

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							
Week 5							
Week 6							
Week 7							
Week 8							
Week 9	REVISION						
Week 10	REVISION						
Week 11	REVISION						
Week 12	REVISION AND FINAL PREPARATION						

Evening study period
 Daytime study period
 Other commitments

Colour boxes in your preferred highlighter colours.

Getting started – Get to know your exam

- Review the [syllabus and study guide](#) ➤ This gives you an understanding of the aims and objectives of the exam, learning outcomes and exam structure
- Scan the AB [specimen exam](#) ➤ The specimen exam provides you with a clear picture of how AB will be assessed and how the exam is structured as well as the likely style and range of questions that you could see in the real exam
- Review the [examining team's guidance](#) ➤ Using these resources at the start of your studies will help you understand the focus of the exam by concentrating on the exam structure, question style, exam technique and tips as well as pitfalls to avoid – see extracts from the examiner's approach article over the page
- Review the [examiner's reports from the last four sittings](#) ➤ These provide feedback on students' performance after each exam session, highlight problem areas that students need to improve on and tell you what the examining teams are looking for; these are critical to your success in passing AB – and take a quick look at [AB – A guide to using the examiner's reports](#) for an overview of some of the most common challenges students face
- View the study support video [AB/FAB MTQ advice](#) ➤ View this video for pointers to some of the key skills you will need to pass AB as well as more information about the exam structure and exam technique
- Scan the [exam technique and syllabus updates articles](#) ➤ The articles here cover answering multiple-choice questions, computer-based exam technique and how to prepare for knowledge modules exams – you will need to come back to these during the revision phase but they will provide you with guidance that will be helpful in attempting questions throughout the learning phase

Getting started – Understanding the structure of AB (extracts from the examiner's guidance – structure of paper)

Comments on exam structure:

Part A of the paper will comprise questions worth both one mark and two marks, but the style of these questions will remain similar to those that are currently set. In total there will be 16 one-mark questions and 30 two-mark questions.

Part B of the paper will introduce a new type of question, which will be described as multiple-task questions (MTQs) in this article. There will be six MTQs in part B of the paper, each worth four marks. There are six syllabus areas, and there will be one MTQ on each of them. Each MTQ will be specific to a syllabus area, with no crossover between the six generic parts of the syllabus.



Comments on marks awarded:

Section A:

For all MR and MRM questions in this section, no partial marking is available, so candidates must select all correct options to obtain full marks, otherwise they will score zero.

Section B:

If a candidate selects fewer answers than the number required or selects some wrong options, marks are awarded pro rata. Thus, if a question has four correct responses each worth 0.5 marks and the candidate selects only three responses or only three correct options, it is possible to score a maximum of 1.5 marks.



Students who use examiners' reports are more likely to pass than those who don't.





Learning phase

Your checklist

- Work through the control sheet which has been designed to give you a structured approach to your learning phase to ensure you:
 - gain the knowledge you need; and
 - learn how to apply that knowledge to pass the exam

Learning phase – Get the most out of your control sheet

“

Students who use ACCA’s learning support resources achieve higher exam scores than those who don’t.

”

Use the control sheet relevant to the Approved Content Provider’s materials you have purchased:

- ✓ BPP Learning Media – page 13
- ✓ Kaplan Publishing – page 14

Tick the box **Content** in the control sheet once you have:

- ✓ Read through the introduction to the chapter
- ✓ Actively read and understood each chapter’s content
- ✓ Noted any additional commentary and exam focus tips provided
- ✓ Worked through and understood examples and illustrations of concepts given

Tick the box **Quiz/Test** in the control sheet once you have:

- ✓ Attempted the quiz at the end of the chapter (if you are using BPP material) or the test your understanding questions throughout the chapter (if you are using Kaplan material)

Tick the box **Questions** in the control sheet once you have:

- ✓ Attempted the questions referred to in the Question Bank (if you are using BPP materials) or the practice questions at the end of the text (if you are using Kaplan materials)

Tick the box **ACCA related resources** in the control sheet once you have:

- ✓ Read / viewed the related ACCA article(s) / video(s) signposted
- ✓ Note that ACCA produces new articles and videos throughout the year and so you should always check the **technical articles** page on the website to ensure you have seen all of the related resources

Learning phase – Tips for success



Tips for success

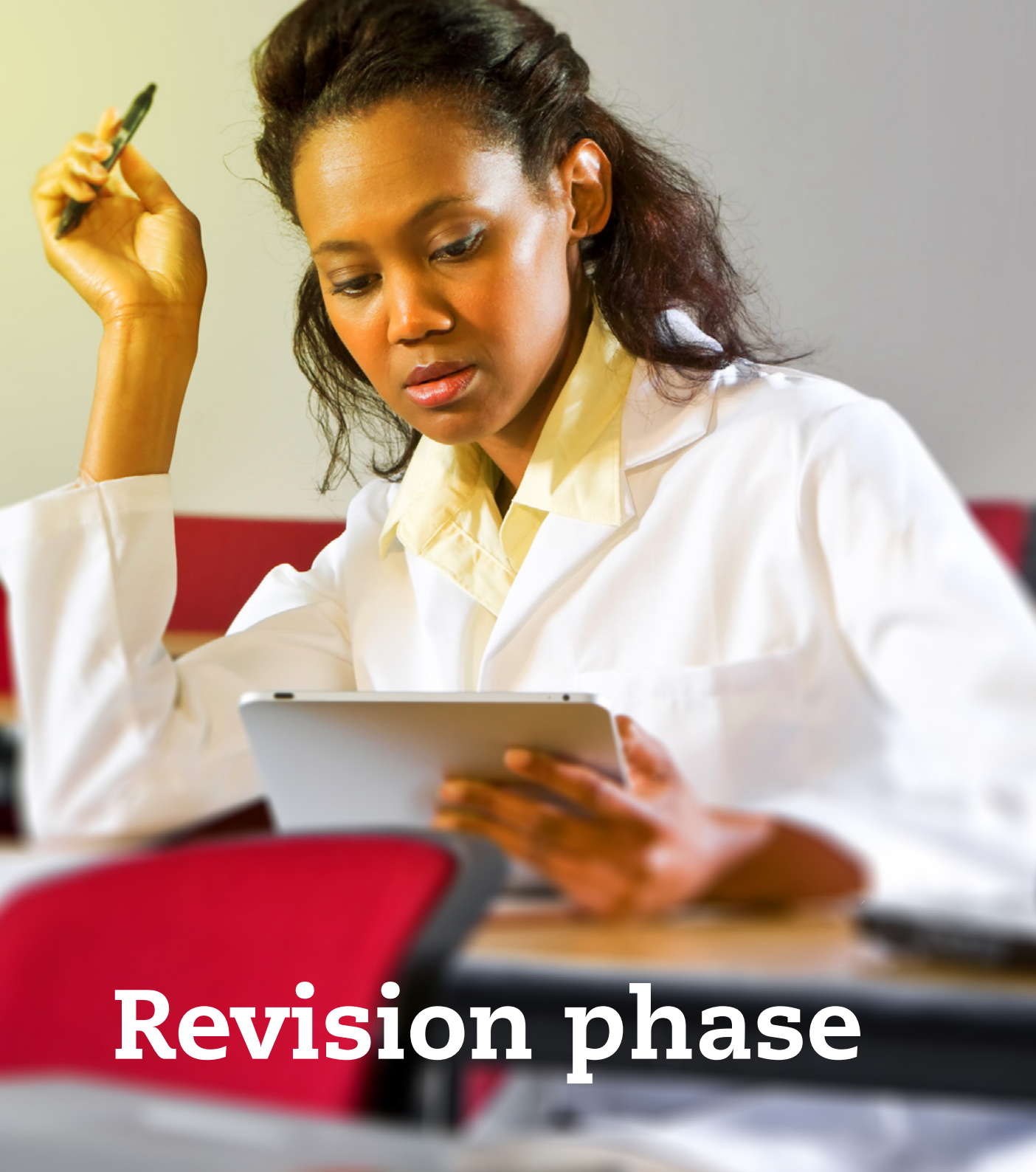
- ✓ Actively read the material – ask yourself ‘do I understand this?’ If not re-read and re-work examples – if you still struggle, make a note and come back to it.
- ✓ Scan headings before going into the detail to give you an idea of the content first and consider highlighting, underlining, making notes, drawing pictures or mind maps – whatever helps you to remember.
- ✓ Consider using the additional resources provided by the [Approved Content Providers](#) including for example passcards or pocket notes to help you remember the key knowledge areas.
- ✓ Always work through the questions signposted – it is vital that you practise questions throughout the learning phase as this will ensure that you are applying the knowledge you learn as you progress.
- ✓ Make sure you use the ACCA resources to help your understanding – these give you real insight to help you in your exam.
- ✓ If you find you are not covering all of the material in each study period, build some extra time into your study plan – everyone works at a different pace.
- ✓ Keep an eye on [Student Accountant](#) for any relevant articles.
- ✓ Visit the [ACCA Learning Community](#) regularly to view new video content and to join online study events.
- ✓ There are [PER \(Practical Experience Requirement\) objectives](#) associated with specific syllabus areas and, if possible, you should try to gain experience in these alongside your studying as this will help you to put your studies into a workplace context and reinforce what you have learned.
- ✓ Try to read a good quality business journal or newspaper regularly and use this to help bring your studies to life by linking your learning into what you are reading.

Learning phase – Control sheet for BPP Learning Media

Chapter	Content	Quiz/Test	Questions	ACCA related resources
✓ tick the boxes below when complete				
Introduction				
1 Business organisations and their stakeholders				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not-for-profit organisations (1) • Not-for-profit organisations (2) • Communicating core values and mission
2 The business environment				
3 The macroeconomic environment				
4 Microeconomic factors				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to microeconomics
5 Business organisation, structure and strategy				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations • Mintzberg's theory on organisations
6 Organisational culture and committees				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of marketing • Corporate Governance – The board of directors and standing committees
7 Corporate governance and social responsibility				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Governance – The board of directors and standing committees
8 The role of accounting				
9 Control, security and audit				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal controls
10 Identifying and preventing fraud				
11 Leading and managing people				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of leadership style
12 Recruitment and selection				
13 Diversity and equal opportunities				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunities
14 Individuals, groups and teams				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of teams
15 Motivating individuals and groups				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Herzberg's motivation theory • Let's get motivated
16 Training and development				
17 Performance appraisal				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the importance of appraisals
18 Personal effectiveness and communication				
19 Ethical considerations				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A question of ethics

Learning phase – Control sheet for Kaplan Publishing

Chapter	Content	Quiz/Test	Questions	ACCA related resources
	✓ tick the boxes below when complete			
Introduction				
1 The business organisation				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not-for-profit organisations (1) • Not-for-profit organisations (2)
2 Business organisation and structure				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations • The role of marketing
3 Organisational culture in business				
4 Information technology and information systems in business				
5 Stakeholders in business organisations				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating core values and mission
6 External analysis – political and legal factors				
7 External analysis – economic factors				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to microeconomics
8 External analysis – social, environmental and technological factors				
9 Competitive factors				
10 Professional ethics in accounting and business				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A question of ethics
11 Governance and social responsibility in business				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Governance – The board of directors and standing committees
12 Law and regulation governing accounting				
13 Accounting and finance functions within business				
14 Financial systems and procedures				
15 The relationship between accounting and other business functions				
16 Audit and financial control				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal controls
17 Fraud, fraudulent behaviour, and their prevention in business				
18 Leadership, management and supervision				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mintzberg's theory on organisations • Theories of leadership style
19 Recruitment and selection of employees				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunities
20 Individual, group and team behaviour				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of teams
21 Motivating individuals and groups				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Herzberg's motivation theory • Let's get motivated
22 Learning and training at work				
23 Review and appraisal of individual performance				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the importance of appraisals
24 Personal effectiveness at work				
25 Communicating in business				



Revision phase

Your checklist

- Revisit areas you struggled with during the learning phase
- Ensure you are confident with the knowledge needed to pass the exam
- Make sure you are able to apply that knowledge in questions

Revision phase – Question practice

- Exam-standard question practice is vital now
- Work through as many questions as possible and all mock exams included in the [Approved Content Provider](#) question and answer banks – remember these are best for question practice as they include past exam questions updated for syllabus and format changes
- Work through the [specimen exam](#). This will provide you with a clear picture of what the exam will look like making sure you know what to expect on the day



Tips for success

- ✓ Consider blocking time in your study plan for specific questions or mock exams to ensure you cover everything.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to attempt questions you have already done – especially the ones you found tricky first time round.
- ✓ It is really important that you do some questions in full, to exam time – time management is often an issue and the more you prepare yourself the better you will perform in the exam.
- ✓ To keep motivation high, break some questions into individual parts, write plans or notes for some parts and do others in full.
- ✓ Work through the answers carefully – pay attention to areas you got wrong and understand where you went wrong – it is better to do a few questions well than lots of questions badly.
- ✓ Try not to look at the answers before really attempting the question – you won't be able to do this in the real exam!

Revision phase – Key resources

- Review the [examining team's guidance](#) again in the context of what you have learnt
- Remind yourself of areas that students often struggle with and obtain tips on how to ensure you do not make the same mistakes by reviewing the [examiner's reports](#) from the last four sittings again, this time working through the [AB – A guide to using the examiner's reports](#) to really benefit from the valuable advice provided
- View the study support video [AB/FAB MTQ](#) advice again
- Read the [exam technique and syllabus updates articles](#) – this time linking into what you have learnt
- Make sure you read the [study skills articles in Student Accountant](#) covering topics such as how to overcome exam anxiety as well as checking the [Student Accountant Hub](#) for any new technical articles related to AB



Students who use 5 minutes with the examining team videos are more likely to pass than those who don't.



Tips for success

- ✓ Don't give up easily – if you really cannot understand something then consider posting a question on the [ACCA Learning Community](#) – if you found it difficult so will others.
- ✓ Don't miss the [specimen exam](#) – this is a full example of the exam and replicates the exam environment – attempt in full to time.
- ✓ Think about purchasing a [Practice Test](#) – practice makes perfect and, even better, you get personalised feedback diagrams highlighting your strengths and weaknesses, so you can refine your revision. See the [Practice tests video](#) on the student section of the website for more information on how useful these can be for your revision.

Revision phase – What the examiner has said about AB (extracts from December 2017 examiner's report)

“ Comments on section A:

Performance varied on questions relating to theories and concepts. Some theories presented little difficulty, but some of the more challenging theories inevitably required greater thought, and are likely to have taken longer to answer. Some candidates had problems with 'softer' topics relating to governance and ethics.

The questions with the lowest pass rates were on the following subjects:

- Edgar Schein's theory of organisational culture;
- The purpose of corporate governance;
- The duties of an external auditor;
- In the context of selecting employees, methods of selection;
- The meaning of independence.

A very small minority of candidates did not complete all of the questions in part A. This was a missed opportunity, as even if the answer is not known it may be possible to make an informed guess once some of the distractors (incorrect answers) are eliminated.

”

“ Sample question 23 on Schein's theory of organisational culture:

According to Schein, the observable, explicit elements of organisational culture are made up of behaviour, artefacts and which other variable?

- A Attitudes
- B Values
- C Unspoken rules
- D Assumptions

The correct answer is A.

Schein's theory has several layers, but the basic dimensions of the theory are quite practical in nature. Perhaps the quickest route to the correct answer is the use of the word 'observable' in the prompt. Attitudes are often observable in individuals, but values, unspoken rules and assumptions to a much lesser extent. It could also be argued that values and assumptions are rarely 'explicit', and unspoken rules never so.

”



Final preparation

Your checklist

- You are clear on the knowledge you need to pass the exam as well as how to apply that knowledge
- You have the skills you need to pass the exam – eg time management

Ensure you are familiar with:

- the exam format
- the style of questions
- the way the marks are allocated
- what specific syllabus areas are likely to be tested and in which questions

Final preparation – Tips for success

“ An extract from the syllabus and study guide for AB:

The syllabus for Accountant in Business (AB)/FAB introduces students who may not have a business background, to the business, which as an entity is made up of people and systems which interact with the environment and with each other.

The syllabus begins with examining the purpose and types of business which exist, the key stakeholders and the rights and responsibilities that businesses have in connection with them, exploring the external influences that affect the business in its environment, including economic, legal, social and technological factors.

The syllabus then examines the structure and functions of business, focusing on corporate governance and the specific accounting related roles in this process, particularly in financial reporting, assurance, control and compliance. The syllabus then introduces key leadership, management and people issues such as effective individual and team behaviour, motivation and personal effectiveness. ”

“ An extract from the December 2017 Examiner's report :

Most candidates will benefit by spending more time on understanding the technical words and jargon associate with the study of management, organisations and human behaviour. The more complicated theories may not always be the most difficult to understand, as some of the words and phrases encountered will serve as ‘triggers’ to memory. At the same time, it should never be assumed that even subjects which appear to be ‘common sense’ will be easier in an examination environment. Those who practice questions across the whole syllabus are spending their preparation and revision time wisely.

Candidates need to strike a balance between spending enough time on each question, and not thinking too much about why answers that appear to be incorrect might be justifiable. The examination will never include trick questions, so if an answer stands out as the correct response, then this is probably confirmation that the candidate understands the issues. ”

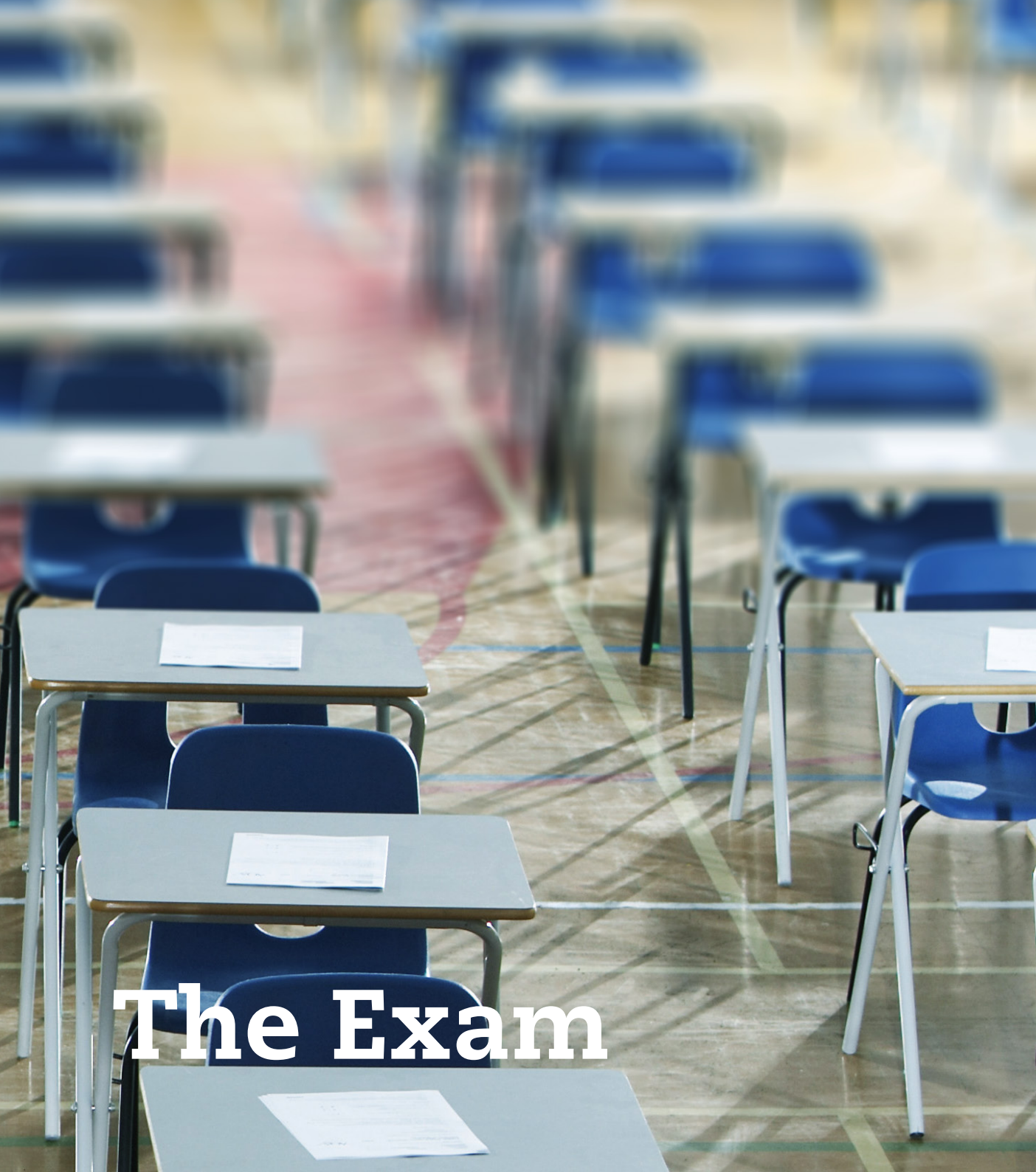
“

Students who use specimen resources are more likely to pass than those who don't. ”



Tips for success

- ✓ Go over questions again that you found difficult during the revision phase and make sure you attempt at least one mock again in full to time.
- ✓ If you are unsure about the exam format, the style of questions or what specific syllabus areas are likely to be tested in which questions, read the [syllabus and study guide](#) again.
- ✓ If you are not sure about how the marks are allocated review the [specimen exam](#) again.



The Exam

Your checklist

- Make sure you are ready to walk into your exam

The Exam – Tips for success



Tips for success

Very few students enjoy taking exams but there are things you can do to make the experience less stressful!

- ✓ Identify where the CBE centre is.
- ✓ Plan your route to the CBE centre, considering the time of day you will be travelling and any potential issues.
- ✓ Have in place a back-up plan in case of traffic problems or public transport delays.

- ✓ Ensure you have all the equipment you need for the exam (black pens, calculator etc).
- ✓ Don't forget to take your exam docket with you as well as your student identification.
- ✓ Eat properly before you leave for the exam.
- ✓ Sleep properly – do not spend the night before doing last minute late night revision – you will perform so much better if you are alert and well rested (and in any case, last minute revision will only cause you to panic!).

- ✓ Try not to get into discussions with fellow students just before the exam about what might come up – again this will only cause you stress.

Once the exam is over:

- ✓ Relax.
- ✓ Don't over analyse – you cannot change anything now!

Good
Luck!

Appendix – Links

GETTING
STARTED

LEARNING
PHASE

REVISION
PHASE

FINAL
PREPARATION

THE EXAM

APPENDIX
– LINKS

Appendix – Links

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04, 12, 16	Approved Content Provider	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/learning-provider/learningproviders-alpc.html
04, 06	ACCA's Approved Learning Partners	https://learningcommunity.accaglobal.com/#discover/1
04	ACCA-X	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/your-study-options/acca-x-online-courses-from-acca.html
04	On-demand CBE centre	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-entry-and-administration/computer-based-exams/on-demand-cbes/booking-an-on-demand-cbe.html
04, 12, 17	ACCA Learning Community	https://learningcommunity.accaglobal.com
04	Exam resource finder	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources.html
04	Student section	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student.html
04, 12	Student Accountant	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/employer/supporting-trainees/sa-direct.html
04	BPP English Language support for ACCA	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/bpp-english-language-course.html
08, 20	Syllabus and study guide	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/acca-qual-student-journey/qual-resource/acca-qualification/f1/syllabus-study-guide.html
08, 16, 17, 20	Specimen exam	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/pilot-papers.html
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08, 17	Exam technique and syllabus updates articles	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/acca-qual-student-journey/qual-resource/acca-qualification/f1/technical-articles.html
08, 17	AB – A guide to using the examiner's reports	http://www.accaglobal.com/content/dam/ACCA_Global/Learning%20Providers/exam-reflection/Reflections-1st_F1-Accountant-in-Business-FORM.pdf
11	Technical articles	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html
12	PER (Practical Experience Requirement) objectives	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/practical-experience/performance-objectives.html
13, 14	Not-for-profit organisations (1)	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html
13, 14	Not-for-profit organisations (2)	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html

Appendix – Links

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13, 14	Introduction to microeconomics	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html
13, 14	Organisations	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html
13, 14	Mintzberg's theory on organisations	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html
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13, 14	Theories of leadership style	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html
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13, 14	Understanding the importance of appraisals	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html
13, 14	A question of ethics	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-support-resources/fundamentals-exams-study-resources/f1/technical-articles.html
17	Study skills articles in Student Accountant	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/sa/study-skills.html
17	Student Accountant Hub	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/sa.html
17	Practice Test	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-entry-and-administration/preparing-for-exams/practice-tests.html
17	Practice tests video	http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/exam-entry-and-administration/preparing-for-exams/practice-tests.html

