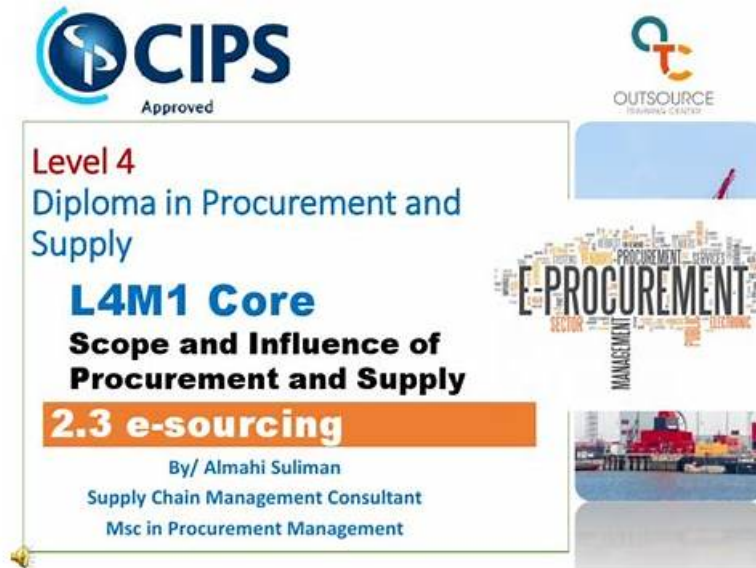


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Electronic systems used in sourcing



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CIPS L4M1 Exam Syllabus Topics:

Topic	Details
Topic 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and analyse the need for compliance: This section measures skills of compliance officers and sector-specific procurement managers in understanding different economic and industrial sectors such as
Topic 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and analyse aspects of organisational infrastructure that shape the scope of procurement and supply chain functions: This section measures that skill of supply chain strategists and organizational analysts in understanding corporate governance, documented policies, accountability, and ethics. It also covers the impact of organisational policies and procedures on procurement and supply

Topic 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public, private, charity, not-for-profit, manufacturing, retail, construction, financial, agriculture, and service sectors. It also covers analyzing the impact of the public sector on procurement and supply chain activities public sector objectives, regulations, competition, accountability, and value for money. It finally covers the impact of the private sector on procurement or supply chain activities.
Topic 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and analyse the key steps when procuring goods or services: This section measures that skills of purchasing managers and procurement officers in identifying and evaluating stages in the sourcing process, planning, supplier selection, and contract management.
Topic 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures, strategies, manuals, and internal function involvement.

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CIPS Scope and Influence of Procurement and Supply Sample Questions (Q32-Q37):

NEW QUESTION # 32

What is a P2P system (5 points)? Explain the impact that using IT systems can have on the way the Procurement department of an organisation functions (25 points).

Answer:

Explanation:

See the solution in Explanation part below

Explanation:

- Definition of P2P - Purchase to Pay or Procure to Pay is the process an organisation takes from ordering a product to paying for it. The main stages of this process are product ordering, supplier requisition to pay, budget authorisation, receipt of delivery, and invoice processing.

- Impact of using IT Systems - can include the use of these systems: EPOS, barcodes/ RDIF, e-commerce systems such as POs and invoicing, and electronic communications such as email. Impacts can be; increased productivity, quicker processes, higher levels of visibility, increased responsiveness to demands, cost savings, less paper used, supplier relationships are managed virtually rather than in person. Generally the impacts are positive, but you could also discuss some disadvantages or challenges a department might face as the question is quite open.

Example Essay

A Procure-to-Pay system is a comprehensive solution that automates and integrates the procurement process within an organization, covering the entire lifecycle from requisitioning goods or services to making payments to suppliers.

The P2P process includes the following: a buyer requests an item, they put in a requisition, it is accepted by the supplier, the item is delivered and the item is then paid for. The order of the steps may be different depending on the industry / requirement (e.g. sometimes payment is made before delivery), or sometimes there are additional steps such as getting the requisition approved by a manager.

Nowadays the P2P process is mainly digitalised- orders are made online or via a PO system and payment is made via BACS. It is not common to pay for items in cash or by cheque any more. This digitalisation has had many effects on the way the procurement department functions. The P2P system streamlines and standardizes the purchasing process, enhancing efficiency, transparency, and control.

The integration of Information Technology (IT) systems has a profound impact on the functioning of the Procurement department within an organization. This digital transformation brings about significant improvements in efficiency, transparency, collaboration, and decision-making processes. Some of the key impacts include:

- Raised productivity - using IT systems results in quicker processes and they're often more accurate and consistent than humans doing the tasks manually. For example, an electronic requisition system can flag when a requisition isn't completed properly (e.g. part of the requisition is missing or a supplier name has been spelled incorrectly). When doing this manually the errors may not be

spotted.

- Innovation - the use of IT means new avenues can be explored in terms of new product markets and new supply chains. Without the use of IT, procurement may be limited to working with local suppliers or those they can find in the phone book. Using IT systems such as e-auctions and even just the internet to complete research, opens up more opportunities to make purchases. This could involve working with international supply chains and result in cost savings for the business.

- Improved business processes - the use of IT means there is more transparency as everything is recorded and it is easier for managers to oversee. This results in less risk exposure for the business, particularly in fraud. The use of IT also standardises processes which makes it easy for everyone to know what to do.

- When IT is used, there is an increased responsiveness of the procurement function - it allows for 24/7/365 ordering compared to making purchases in person in a shop which may only be open 9-5. Moreover, there are paperless communications when IT is used- this has a positive environmental impact

- Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) - IT systems support Supplier Relationship Management by providing tools to assess and manage supplier performance. This can include logging KPIs and tracking supplier performance. SRM functionalities enhance communication, collaboration, and visibility into supplier relationships.

In summary, the integration of IT systems into the Procurement department transforms traditional practices, making processes more streamlined, data-driven, and strategically focused. The impact is not only on operational efficiency but also on the ability of the procurement function to contribute strategically to the organization's overall objectives.

Tutor Notes

- The word impact is quite vague. I've mainly talked about advantages but you could discuss the impact that the use of IT has had on the department, not just in how it functions, but in how it is perceived. IT has professionalised the procurement industry as a whole- it's no longer seen as 'purchasing' but as a vital function within a business that contributes to added value and strategic goals.

- You could also talk about the impact it's had on ways of working. The use of IT has allowed for innovative procurement and manufacturing techniques such as Just-In-Time. The use of IT also ends silo-working, instead allowing for more collaboration with other business departments and the supply chain as a whole.

- LO 3.4 P. 171

NEW QUESTION # 33

Explain the impact that having a Corporate Governance Framework can have on the policies and processes of the procurement department (25 points)

Answer:

Explanation:

See the solution in Explanation part below

Explanation:

A basic response would include:

- What a Corporate Governance Framework is - the system of rules, practices and processes which directs and controls a company. Corporate Governance refers to the way in which companies are governed and to what purpose.

- Impact this has on policies and processes - means the procurement department follows regulatory mechanisms (e.g. financial regulations, Codes of Practices), has a checks and balances system (such as auditing), uses e-procurement technologies, vets staff and suppliers, has a clear segregation of duties etc.

This is a very open question and there are so many correct answers. In fact, it's quite hard to give a wrong answer to this question - as long as your response explains a policy or process that a procurement department can have that ensures they're following Corporate Governance - that's right!

A good response may mention:

- Corporate governance is in essence a 'toolkit' that allows an organisation to effectively manage itself, ensuring that it's policies and procedures are compliant with legislation and are ethical. It also ensures that the company meets its objectives.

- The impact Corporate Governance has on the procurement department will be in mandating the ways in which goods and services are procured and in the general ways of working of the procurement department.

- In your response you should mention 5 (ish) different ways Corporate Governance would impact on how procurement do their job. Examples include:

- Ethical Conduct - corporate governance ensures that the company is operating in a legal and ethical way. This influences the processes Procurement will do and the type of suppliers they will engage with. This may also be in their approach to relationships and negotiations- seeking out collaborative relationships with suppliers rather than looking to exploit them. For example, an organisation that does not have a Corporate Governance structure may look to take advantage of suppliers and achieve the lowest cost possible at the expense of the supply chain and local community. An organisation that has strong Corporate Governance would work with suppliers, developing the relationships and thinking long-term about the impact on the local community. The organisation may therefore prioritise standards such as Fair Trade over price, and this would be reflected in the way tenders are evaluated by the procurement department.

- Use of Checks and Balance system- Corporate Governance ensures strong financial controls are implemented throughout the

organisation. For the procurement department this may result in purchases being made to strict budgets (rather than just spending whatever they want), and business cases being written up and approved before the organisation spends a large amount of money on a single item. Another impact may be in the use of audits. For example, peer reviewing tenders and contract awards to ensure all members of the Procurement Team are following internal processes correctly.

- Anti-fraud prevention mechanisms. An important area of Corporate Governance is ensuring the organisation is free from fraud and corruption. This impacts on Procurement's policies and processes as it will mean scrutinising tenders and who is being awarded contracts. It may result in high levels of Due Diligence being completed on suppliers before entering into contracts and providing a whistle-blowing service for staff to report issues.

- Security measures- this will be to protect the organisation from risk. It may include the procurement department vetting new staff by completing background checks. It may also involve the segregation of procurement duties so that no individual has too much power. E.g. one person raises the requisition and another person approves the purchase. Security may also be in ways of working such as password protecting documentation and limiting access to confidential information.

- Use of a Purchasing Policy Manual - this provides operational guidance on procurement policies and procedures to all staff members. It may detail things like who has permission to order what, who the Delegated Purchasing Authority (DPA) is and the roles and responsibilities of the team.

An excellent response may also include

- Reasons why Corporate Governance Frameworks impact on procurement policies and practices. This could include reasons of accountability, reputation and risk management, procurement's links with other departments.

- You could also look at what processes would look like with Corporate Governance compared to without it (with CG = rule driven, autocratic but organisation is protected from risk. Without CG = laissez-faire, everyone does whatever they like, very risky)

- You could also provide further examples, either real life or hypothetical. Investopedia has some great information and examples you could use: Corporate Governance Definition: How It Works ([investopedia.com](https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/corporate-governance-definition-how-it-works/))

NEW QUESTION # 34

Explain, with examples, the advantages of a Procurement Department using electronic systems (25 marks)

Answer:

Explanation:

See the solution in Explanation part below

Explanation:

- Mention of some of the following benefits with at least one example provided against each; cost savings, time savings, more efficient, higher levels of transparency, easier to access historical records to inform upon decision making, mitigates risks such as fraudulent spending, easier to track spend against budgets, ensures compliance with regulations, provides 'real-time' information, paperless communications (so more environmentally friendly), assists in Supply Chain Management and integration with supply partners.

- I'd suggest 5 is a good amount to aim for

Example Essay

Procurement stands to gain numerous benefits from the adoption of electronic systems. These electronic tools and systems bring efficiency, accuracy, transparency, and cost-effectiveness to the procurement process. Here are several compelling reasons why procurement should leverage electronic systems:

Cost savings - the use of electronic tools saves organisations money. Although there is an initial cost outlay, over time the systems will save the organisation money. For example the use of e-procurement tools can save money by accessing a wider pool of suppliers. For example, when using an e-sourcing portal, a tender may reach a larger number of suppliers- this makes the tender more competitive thus driving down prices. Compared to traditional methods such as phoning suppliers for prices, the use of electronic portals encourages suppliers to 'sharpen their pencils' and provide the best prices in order to win work. Money is also saved as communication is digital (so there is no costs for paper and postage).

Time savings - electronic tools automate a lot of processes which saves time. An example of this is e-requisitioning tools where orders can be placed automatically by a piece of technology when quantities of a material reach a certain level. For example, in a cake manufacturing organisation they may use an MRP system which calculates how many eggs are required per day. The machine knows that when the company only have 50 eggs left, a new order needs to be issued to the supplier. The MRP system (e-requisitioning system) therefore saves time as the Procurement department doesn't have to manually pick up the phone to place the order with the supplier- it is done automatically.

Access to higher levels of information - e-Procurement gives you centralised access to all your data. You can access the system to look at historical purchases with ease compared to having to dig through folders and filing cabinets. For example, an electronic PO system will hold details of all historical POs, this means if someone has a question about a PO that was raised 4 months ago, finding the information is much easier and quicker. Some systems may also be able to provide analytical data such as changes to spend over time, or which suppliers a buyer spends the most money with. This higher level of information can help inform upon future decision making. For example, if the organisation wishes to consolidate its supplier base it would look through historical data provided by the

electronic system to find out which suppliers are used the least and remove these from the 'pre-approved supplier list'. This level of data might not be available in manual systems.

Better budget tracking - using electronic systems allows for real-time information to be collected which allows Procurement Managers to see where spend is compared to forecasts and budgets. An example of this is in the use of Pre-Payment Cards - rather than giving staff members petty cash to make transactions and having to chase this up and collect receipts and change, a pre-payment card usually comes with an online portal where a manager can see what has been purchased and the remaining budget on that card for the month. A manager may be able to see for example that a member of staff has spend £300 of their allotted £500 monthly allowance.

Higher levels of transparency and control - using E-procurement tools allows an organisation to track who is ordering what. For example, an e-requisitioning tool may allow Procurement Assistants to make purchases up to £500 but set an automatic escalation if they try to buy something of higher value. This allows for Management to have greater levels of visibility and more control over spending. Another example of transparency and control is in the use of e-sourcing tools to run a competitive tender exercise. All communication between the buyer and suppliers is tracked on the system and award letters can be sent via the system too. This reduces the risk of information being lost.

Environmental benefits- the use of e-procurement tools means that there is less paperwork involved. For example, rather than creating a physical PO which needs to be signed by a manager, an electronic system can allow a manager to sign-off the purchase by clicking a button. This means there is no requirement for the document to be printed. This saves paper and thus has a positive on the environment. Using electronic systems may help an organisation achieve their environmental targets.

In conclusion there are numerous benefits for procurement to adopt e-procurement tools. Depending on the sector and requirements of each individualised company, some advantages may be more pertinent than others, but it is undeniable that technology is helping to shape the industry into a value adding function of organisations.

Tutor Notes

- With an essay like this you could use subheadings and number the advantages if you like. It's a good idea to do one advantage per paragraph and using formatting really helps the examiner to read your essay.

- study guide p.108

NEW QUESTION # 35

In the supplier selection part of the Procurement Cycle, what criteria can a Procurement Manager use to ensure they award to the best supplier? (25 points)

Answer:

Explanation:

See the solution in Explanation part below

Explanation:

How to approach this question:

- This is quite an open question and there are many different things you could mention. One way to approach it would be to use Carter's 10 Cs- discuss a couple of these. OR just give a couple of criteria in different paragraphs. Some ideas include: Supplier financial status, Reputation / Reference, Quality, Availability, CSR Policies / Ethics / Environmental considerations, Accreditations, Added Value. This list is not exhaustive.

- If you're going for Carter's 10 Cs you could name a couple of these: competency, consistency, capability, control, cost, cash, clean, communication, culture, commitment

- I don't think either approach is better or worse. Choose the criteria you know the most about and write about those.

- The question doesn't tell you how many criteria to name, so you have to make a judgement call here. I would aim for 5-6. But if you can only remember 4 that's fine. The main thing they're looking for is that you explain for each one 1) what it is 2) how procurement can check 3) why procurement would look at that criteria 4) an example. If you do too many you risk not going into enough detail on each. It's a balance. 5 is always a good number to aim for if the question doesn't state.

Example Essay

In the procurement cycle, the supplier selection phase is a critical juncture that demands consideration. Procurement Managers shoulder the responsibility of identifying and awarding contracts to suppliers who not only meet immediate needs, but contribute to the long-term success of the organization. This essay explores various criteria a Procurement Manager can employ to ensure the selection of the best supplier: financial stability, reputation, quality, availability, CSR policies, and added value.

Financial stability is a foundational criterion in supplier selection. Assessing a supplier's financial status involves a multifaceted evaluation, with liquidity and gearing ratio taking center stage. The acid test, comparing short-term assets to liabilities, offers insights into a supplier's ability to settle debts promptly, with a ratio exceeding 1 indicating financial health. Meanwhile, the gearing ratio, reflecting the proportion of capital funded by loans, aids in gauging financial risk, with a ratio below 50% considered low-risk.

Relying on published Profit and Loss statements and income statements, along with financial credit checks from platforms like Dun and Bradstreet, empowers Procurement Managers to make informed decisions. This financial scrutiny is imperative to avoid entering contracts with suppliers facing imminent financial struggles, safeguarding against potential disruptions to the supply chain.

Reputation and references are another pivotal criterion. Seeking references from previous contracts allows Procurement Managers

to gauge a supplier's track record in successfully delivering on similar commitments. Independent reviews and informal market inquiries supplement this information, providing a holistic understanding of a supplier's performance. However, caution is advised in overreliance on past performance, as variables like personnel changes or contract scale differences may impact outcomes. Recognizing that past shortcomings may have been addressed internally further emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to reference evaluation.

Thirdly, Quality. Beyond the product itself, considerations extend to the supplier's technological capabilities, manufacturing processes, and relevant accreditations such as ISO 9001. Physical visits to supplier sites may be warranted, especially for products like raw materials where samples can be requested. Adhering to recognized safety standards and assessing factors like fire retardancy ensures that the quality of manufactured goods aligns with established benchmarks.

Next, Availability is another important criteria to consider. Procurement Managers must evaluate a supplier's capacity and capability to meet specific requirements. Inquiries about existing contracts and flexibility in response to demand fluctuations provide insights into a supplier's commitment and responsiveness. Assessing the supplier's workload and the significance of the buyer in their client portfolio helps determine the level of attention and service the buyer can expect. A buyer may wish to avoid working for a supplier who is already stretched very thinly with other contracts.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies and ethical considerations have gained prominence in supplier selection. Beyond legal compliance, Procurement Managers may scrutinize a supplier's history for convictions or negative press related to corruption, bribery, or fraud. The presence of a Modern Slavery Policy and Environmental Policy, along with relevant accreditations like ISO14001 or Fair Trade certification, attests to a supplier's commitment to ethical and sustainable practices. Procurement would likely seek to appoint a supplier whose CSR vision aligns with their own company's.

Lastly, added value is an important criteria to consider. This is particularly so for Public Sector Organizations governed by the Social Value Act. In addition to meeting contractual requirements, suppliers may offer knowledge sharing, training, improved processes, or contribute to social value by employing local community members or providing apprenticeships. This criterion aligns procurement decisions with broader organizational goals, enhancing the overall impact of supplier relationships and benefitting the local community.

In conclusion, a careful combination of financial scrutiny, reputation assessment, quality evaluation, availability considerations, CSR policies, and added value analysis forms the bedrock of effective supplier selection in the procurement cycle. Procurement Managers, armed with a holistic understanding of these criteria, should seek not only to fulfil immediate needs, but also consider the long-term impact of supplier appointments.

Tutor Notes

- A 'good' scoring answer (50-70%) will explain the criteria well and give examples. If you're looking for a distinction level answer (70%+) you could also mention advantages, disadvantages and risks associated with each of the criteria. For example, when looking at references and reputation it's important to know that a supplier would only ever provide a good reference to you, they would never tell you of a contract that failed. Another example is that financial data may be skewed- a supplier may have a low score if they are just starting up or have recently remortgaged a property. It's therefore important to get a commentary as well as the figures / scores.

- You could also mention that criteria could be weighted e.g. more importance given to quality than financial status and also consider how easy or difficult it would be to get the information e.g. a supplier may say they have lots of availability to deliver the service you require, but they may just be saying this to win business. How do you know for sure?

- Social Value Act isn't in this syllabus. If you work in Public Sector procurement it's something you'll be very familiar with. If you don't or you're outside of the UK do not worry about this. I've just included it to show how you can bring in your own knowledge to questions like this. You could think of particular criteria that's important to your industry and write about that. The Social Value Act: What is it, and why is it important? (santaler.co.uk)

- Study guide p.77

NEW QUESTION # 36

What is an electronic system? Describe the following: e-requisitioning, e-catalogues, e-sourcing, e-payment technologies (25 marks)

Answer:

Explanation:

See the solution in Explanation part below.

Explanation:

How to approach this question:

- Your response will need 5 definitions. For 25 points that means 5 points per section so think about the level of detail you'll need to include. It would be 5 points for electronic system (i.e. your introduction and conclusion), and then do a paragraph on each of the technologies. In the description you could talk about why it's used and the advantages, and give some examples if you know any.

- Definition of electronic system - a system which uses some form of technology and automates a procurement process than would otherwise have been completed manually.

- E-Requisitioning - a way of ordering goods or services. Includes the use of integrated ordering systems such as: ERP/ ERP II /

MRP / MRP II

- E-Catalogue- an electronic display of what goods can be ordered. A simple example of this may be a supplier displaying the goods they offer on their website and the prices to purchase the goods.

- E-Sourcing - this involves the early stages of the tender process- using an electronic portal to find a supplier and / or conduct a tender exercise.

- E-Payment - the P2P part of the cycle (procure to pay) - may involve electronic POs and Invoices, BACS, CHAPS and SWIFT payment systems, and the use of Purchasing Cards Example essay:

Electronic systems, commonly referred to as E-procurement, is the business-to-business or business-to-consumer purchase of goods or services, typically using the Internet or other information/ networking systems such as ERP systems. It has developed in the past 20 years as technology has improved and replaces time-consuming manual processes and is now considered the 'norm'. Electronic systems and e-procurement can be used throughout the entire supply chain- not just between a single buyer and supplier. Examples of electronic systems including the following:

E-requisitioning

This is often used in manufacturing organisations to order raw materials. An electronic 'bill of materials' is created and stock levels are automatically updated. As materials get used and a pre-determined level is reached, this triggers a new order which is placed via an e-requisitioning system such as MRP. It is a technological version of the traditional kan-ban (2 bin) system. E-requisition tools are often cloud-based. It helps buyers simplify the buying process, track orders and provides higher levels of visibility on spend. The main disadvantage to this technology is that it requires technology interfacing between the buyer and supplier, which may be expensive.

E-catalogues

This is a digital or online version of a catalogue- a document that details what you can buy and at what price.

There are two main types - buy side catalogues and sell side catalogues. A buy-side catalogue is an internal system used by a buyer which hosts a list of pre-approved suppliers from whom purchases can be made. It may include details of commonly bought items and the prices. The use of this reduces maverick spending and ensures consistency in purchases (e.g. whenever lightbulbs need to be ordered, the same lightbulbs are ordered so the office lighting is consistent). A sell-side catalogue is provided by a supplier and details what they offer- it often includes prices, any discounts for bulk buying and may also let buyers know of availability (e.g. the website may say only two items remaining). This may be as simple as a price list on their website, available for anyone to view.

E-sourcing

This is a tool that helps a buyer find the most suitable supplier. Examples include e-tendering websites where a buyer can host a competition to find a supplier. E-auctions are also a type of e-sourcing tool. The tool (often a website) hosts all of the tendering documents and allows for buyers and suppliers to communicate during the tender process (for example if there are any clarifications needed on the specification). Using this tool allows for transparency and equal treatment, but also saves time in completing the tender exercise. PQQs can be automated and some e-sourcing tools include the use of Artificial Intelligence which can 'read' tender submissions and automatically exclude suppliers who do not fulfil the required criteria.

E-payment technologies

These are methods to pay for goods and services that replace the need for cash and cheques. Examples include online bank transfers, electronic Purchase Orders and Invoices and the use of Pre-Payment cards. These act like credit cards for employees to use when they need to buy supplies. For example, if you have a maintenance team that frequently need to purchase low-value items like screws and paint, you could issue the team with a Pre-Payment card with a certain limit (e.g. £500/ month) so they can buy what they need. The company will then automatically be sent a monthly invoice for all of the purchases. This saves time from having to issue the maintenance team with petty cash for the purchases and allows for greater visibility over spend (e.g. how many screws are typically bought per year?). Another typical use is for staff travel.

In conclusion, procurement teams benefit significantly from leveraging electronic tools, including e-requisitioning, e-catalogues, e-sourcing, and e-payment technologies. The adoption of these electronic tools brings about various advantages that enhance efficiency, transparency, cost-effectiveness, and overall effectiveness in the procurement process. Moreover E-procurement tools has helped develop the procurement function into a professional and respected function and allows for a more pro-active rather than reactive approach to purchasing.

Tutor Notes:

- Fun Fact! In the public sector, it is mandated that electronic systems are used in procurement (Public Contract Regulations 2015) as this helps to achieve the objectives of transparency and equal treatment. Where manual systems are used, it is easy to manipulate the tender process. For example, a buyer could read some tender submissions before the deadline for submission and no one would know, but with an electronic system this is impossible as it locks evaluators out until the deadline has passed and all bidders have submitted their responses. (note PCR 2015 is being replaced in 2024- details are still TBC but the above fun fact will still remain in the new legislation- they're definitely still going to make it compulsory).

- You could also mention the names of systems if you know any. For example, e-sourcing tools include MyTenders.com and Delta E-Sourcing. PO / Invoice systems include Sage, Xero and QuickBooks.

- The question doesn't ask for advantages of using these technologies but you could mention this in your answer. Just be sure that this isn't the focus of your response- the question asks specifically for you to DESCRIBE the systems so detailed Explanation: s and examples are where you will secure the most points.

- p.108

