

How to approach the Strategic Business Leader (SBL) exam

SBL is a **4 hour** integrated case study which examines a breadth of organisational functions. It assesses not only technical and ethical skills but the **professional skills** expected of effective leaders and advisers to senior management.

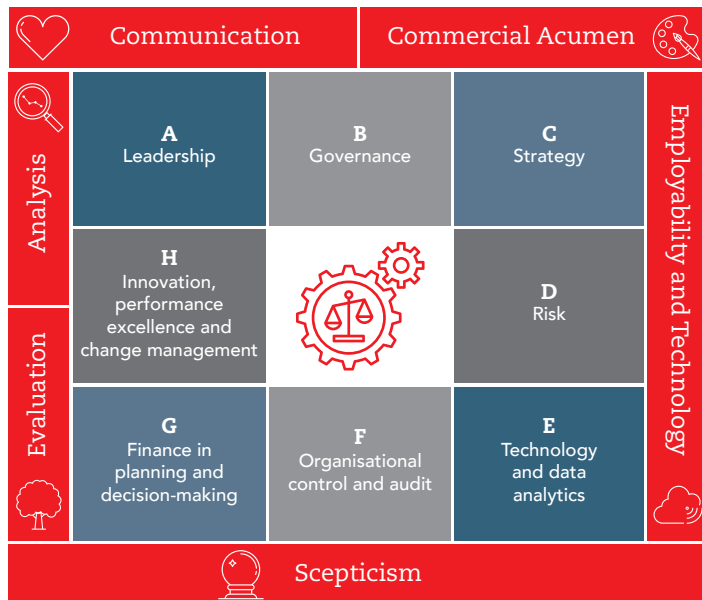
The rationale for the **syllabus** can be summarised as follows:

- Leadership and governance
- Strategy requires an understanding of risk management
- Technology and data analytics are transforming businesses
- Organisational control includes internal audit
- Financial aspects support decision making
- Innovation, performance excellence and change management are essential to organisational success.



SBL – Integrating technical and professional skills

The aim of the syllabus is to combine the main functions of organisations in the context of leadership capabilities.



How to earn Professional Skills marks

20% of the total marks will be allocated to Professional Skills:

- Read each requirement:
 - Note the specified answer format (e.g. a memo)
 - Identify the professional skill (e.g. scepticism) and recall the sub-skills (e.g. probe, question, challenge)
 - Read the prompt for how to demonstrate (e.g. 'by challenging the comments made at the emergency meeting')
- Bear this skill in mind as you:
 - Read the requirement again
 - Actively read the relevant exhibit (e.g. transcript of emergency meeting)
 - Think about and plan your answer points
- When you prepare your answer:
 - Present it in the specified format
 - Use suitable headings and subheadings
 - Make only relevant points
 - Avoid repetition
 - Write clearly and concisely
 - Keep your tone professional

You should complete the **Ethics and Professional Skills Module** before attempting any of the Strategic Professional examinations.



Tips for success in the SBL exam

- ✓ Plan to study the syllabus content as quickly as possible
- ✓ Start practicing case study questions as soon as possible. If you're preparing for an SBL CBE, visit **this page** for guidance on how to approach question practice, including using the new ACCA Practice Platform.
- ✓ Work on your professional skills from the outset
- ✓ Attempt each specimen and past exam in 4 hours and in full.



Tackling the exam

Each task will specify an answer format, for example:

- Prepare a briefing paper ...
- Write a report for the board ...
- Draft a letter ...

A task may have more than one requirement, for example "evaluate... and recommend..."

Most frequently used SBL exam verbs:



EVALUATE



DISCUSS



RECOMMEND

Read this article for more about exam verbs



Links to support resources

- [Examining team guidance](#)
- [The importance of effective communication](#)
- [Professional Skills marking guide](#)
- [How to approach the SBL exam](#)
- [Tutor video review of the March 2020 exam](#)
- [ACCA Practice Platform](#)
- [Past exam questions and answers](#)
- [Examiner's reports](#)
- [Passing Strategic Professional exams](#)
- [Strategic Professional CBE support](#)
- [FAQs](#)