**Activity 5: Impact of technical change   
exam-style question**

Question

Peak Demand Estate Agents are moving away from a landline telephone system in their office to a digital system. They need to choose between one of these systems:

* 'Voice Over IP'
* use of smartphones.

Evaluate the suitability of each of these systems for implementing technical change.

Your evaluation should include:

* the benefits and drawbacks of each system for office use
* a supported conclusion on which to choose.

[12 marks]

# Answer notes

## Evaluation of technical change

**Please note:** there are many more examples of advantages and disadvantages listed below that would be expected to be seen in an exam. These bullets show the wide range of areas that could be included in an answer, and it should be written in prose rather than bullets. Only a few examples of each would normally be expected.

**VoIP advantages:**

* Introduction of internet-based systems may allow more remote working; this can improve productivity for some.
* New digital systems can offer more functionality and features; they may include better call handling and transferring tools.
* All employees, in any location, can be brought into important calls and messages.
* Improved productivity reduces costs and improves the reputation of the organisation.
* VOIP systems often include encryption, increasing security and allowing employees to communicate from any internet location.
* Opportunities for staff to learn new IT skills and improve their own productivity.

**VoIP disadvantages:**

* Remote working is not suitable for all situations and there are costs involved in ensuring access and equipment is available.
* A purely internet-based system is reliant on the internet which can make it less reliable than a landline.
  + There is a chance of VOIP systems being hacked and calls intercepted.
* Employees may accidentally share private information online.
* Training will also need to cover security and data protection of online documents.
* Not all the features will be used at first, despite being paid for.

**Smartphone advantages:**

* Employees will always use the same devices and always be contactable.
* Smartphones include a range of productivity tools that can link with office systems, such as MS Office and email.
* All employees, in any location, can be brought into important audio and video calls and messages.
* Improved productivity reduces costs and improves the reputation of the organisation.
* Smartphones can be integrated with messaging systems, allowing VoIP access anywhere with a mobile connection.
* Encryption and security access can be added and is included in lots of apps.
* New systems such as VR and AR can be linked directly with the smartphone.
* Training can be provided remotely in any location, including peer support.

**Smartphone disadvantages:**

* Not all employees will want to be contacted at any time; may impact on wellbeing.
* Smartphones rely on the mobile network for calls and internet which can make it less reliable than a landline, especially in low-coverage areas.
* Smartphones can be expensive, especially the latest models.
* Employees may accidentally share private information online.
* Wi-Fi access around the country can be limited and not always secure.
* Devices can be easily lost or stolen.
* Training will also need to cover security and data protection of online documents.

**Conclusions**

* Comparisons need to be made between the costs, productivity improvements, communication security and training to see which system will be the best for the business.
* The use of the same device for home and work will concern some employees and rules might need to be put in place.
* The workforce will need training and support and understand the need for technical change.
* New equipment and devices will also need long-term support and maintenance.