

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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GCE leisure studies (6970)
Paper 01

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General comments

The paper appeared to be accessible to candidates and candidate performance was similar to last January.

Most candidates were able to respond effectively to most questions. There was evidence that most candidates had been effectively prepared, with the majority responding positively to the tasks set, offering valid answers, although many candidates did struggle to achieve the higher levels in extended responses. Almost all candidates answered all questions.

It would be very beneficial to candidates in preparing them for the exam, to remind them that it is not necessary to repeat the question when they start an answer. A typical example was 'the advantages for Patrick of being self-employed are....' Followed by 'the advantages for HLC of Patrick being self-employed are' which could take up to 2 lines each – a quarter of the space for the answer. Whilst in theory this could help them focus on the question, they should be encouraged to get straight into the response; there was no evidence to suggest that responses that started with this were any more focussed than those that simply got on with the response.

The applied nature of the GCE is still an issue. The purpose of this GCE is to give learners an applied, work related approach to the leisure industry, involving active learning and the ability to take basic principles and apply them in unfamiliar situations. A few questions will always be aimed at AO1, straightforward recall of knowledge and understanding, but the majority – particularly the longer questions - will require learners to apply this. This is the key skill that they need to tackle this qualification successfully. More candidates are achieving this each time but there is still a considerable amount of generic material offered in the longer applied questions. It involves active use of the stimulus material as indicated in the 'indicative content' parts of the mark scheme for levels based questions. Without this application responses cannot get beyond 3-4 marks out of the 8 available for longer questions, i.e. a grade D/E level.

The information needed for a specific question is normally on the same page, candidates should be aware that for the later questions information from the earlier parts could be useful. The papers are designed to focus candidates on one organisation/person so that they can get a feel for them i.e. a possible real-life situation. Candidates should be made aware of this.

The requirements of some of the command words were generally known by candidates, although many did not manage to access the higher marks in the longer questions as a consideration of terms such as 'analysis' did not show enough depth in response.

Compared to the recruitment part, the 'employment issues' section of this paper showed weaker and patchier performance by candidates, centres should ensure this section is delivered in as much detail in an applied way.

Question 1

The scenario was of Hertborough Leisure Centre. This appeared to be accessible to all candidates.

1(a) most candidates were well aware that volunteers provided a cheap labour force and so were able to gain 1-2 marks. Some also linked this to the fact that it was a public company, correctly suggesting that money may be in short supply, although there were also a number of erroneous links to the idea that HLC did not have to make a profit. Many also recognised that they would tend to be enthusiastic, as they were there by choice, although many only left it implicit as to how this would benefit HLC – i.e. that they could expect real commitment and/or quality of work.

1(b) Candidates produced a wide range of reasons why people volunteer, most of them being highly appropriate. The most common of these were linked to the opportunity to gain experience for working in the industry or at least some volunteering to put on a CV. This was also well linked to possibly improving their UCAS personal statement. Some quite sophisticated responses used a phrase such as 'make them stand out from other candidates' or 'give them the edge'. Some very topical responses linked this to the difficulty of getting a job in the current economic climate. Other reasons tended to focus on the social benefit to individuals – retired people needing something to do or people wanting to improve social ties. The range of ideas was completed with the less altruistic, but nevertheless correct, suggestions that volunteers could get perks from the organisations. A significant minority gave sound examples, many of them appearing to come from personal experience.

1(c) Most candidates could offer at least one suggestion as to how/where an advert for volunteers should be placed. Many also related their suggestions well to the nature of volunteer posts, in that they would need to be local as volunteers would not want to travel far as they would not be paid. Similarly, reasons for using a local paper were that it was cheap but that also people are more likely to volunteer to help within their own community. Online advertising was a common response, but to be acceptable this term itself is not enough – some idea of which web site(s) would be used is needed. HLC's own one was the most commonly suggested, although a few responses linked in the possibility of using social networks very astutely. Unfortunately, some responses did not take into account the nature of the posts – suggestions that they should go in national newspapers, for example, were inappropriate. As always, candidates must consider the nature of the post in making suggestions.

Question 2

2(a) There were many good and thoughtful responses here. Candidates were well aware of the work-life balance benefits that a self employed person can have as they can choose their work times within reason and work as hard as they want to. This was often also specifically linked to having flexibility to fit in with other commitments. There was also sound awareness of the motivational and satisfaction benefits of Patrick running his own business. There were times when reality needed a check in terms of what he could do, particularly when stating that he could charge what he liked for his services, however.

Benefits to the business were well expressed in considering that HLC did not need to pay him when he was not working and that because he provided specialised services they could attract customers that they might not otherwise have. A number of candidates also recognised that because he was self-employed then he would be enthusiastic as it was basically his own business, but that therefore HLC customers would get a top quality service, reflecting well on HLC.

A considerable number of responses tended to leave benefits implicit. Candidates should also ensure that when a question requires an explanation, there will be limited credit for simple statements without development. For example, simply stating that he decides when he works is a limited response without developing as to how that is beneficial – the fact that he can either determine how much he earns and/or create a sound work-life balance according to other commitments he might have. The most common error overall was to give the benefits for HLC linked to Patrick's characteristic rather than to the fact that he was self-employed – careful reading of the question is needed at all times.

2(b) The basic advantages of online applications were quite good, but analysis of them was often weak. 'They are easier to look through' is a statement and does not analyse – it actually gives little idea of understanding of why this is so. There were a considerable number of good responses that failed to connect it to this particular situation – the type of post and characteristics of HLC. These candidates were limited to low level 2 responses, as in applied questions this is the limit for generic responses. Often responses tended to justify their comments as advantages of application forms as opposed to a CV – the question was specific in asking them the benefits of the online as opposed to paper based forms, so these comments were inappropriate.

One common misapprehension was that candidates could only find the form by looking on HLC's web site, rather than having been directed to find it there from an advert elsewhere. Others suggested that the fact that it was online made it available to candidates from a wider area.

It is essential that candidates are made aware of the differences between online advertising and online applications. Candidates gave the benefits of applications forms, but did not distinguish between papers and online.

2(c)(i) The command verb 'evaluate' gave a problem to a number of candidates, who merely stated that it was good they had them and they would enable them to choose the candidates properly. However, many candidates did tackle this with a degree of success, applying their knowledge to show how they would be of use in selecting someone for the post of sports coach. All candidates were in favour of the first two, indicating how they were necessary to carry out the role. Some candidates then went on to suggest that the final essential criteria and the single desirable one would be swapped, particularly as patience would be needed with people trying things for the first time. There were also some interesting, and well justified, suggestions as to what also might be added in order to help select the right person.

2(c)(ii) Although most candidates were aware of the overall role of the criteria in the recruitment process, there was a disappointing lack of detail as to exactly how this happened in many cases. Most responses suggested that they enabled organisations to differentiate between the candidates, but at which stage was not always stated. A number did suggest that once you had scored them the post could be awarded to the best candidate, without any consideration of an interview. As I have stated in previous reports, candidates should experience the entire process in a practical way so at least there is no confusion over basics such as this. As in previous series there was still some confusion as to whether the person specification was a document written by the organisation or by the applicant and this should be made clear to candidates. There were some excellent responses involving the use of a scoring system from the criteria for short listing purposes and also for activities that could be used during an interview day for seeing whether they actually existed in the applicants. This showed some very good applied knowledge and understanding.

2(d)(i) Most candidates managed to suggest at least two correct items for an induction, although a number did become confused with what might be given in an interview as a task. Candidates should be reminded that one word on its own may not constitute a clear enough indication of what an 'item' for an induction is. For example, merely stating 'gym' or even 'gym machines' does not meet the requirement. There was occasional confusion as to what a job shadow was, some believing it to be someone watching the new employee.

2(d)(ii) Many candidates simply stated what each piece of the induction did – i.e. described an induction, which is what the previous question had asked in a shorter way. Sometimes these were accompanied by vague phrases such as 'so they know what to do' but the actual importance of the induction to any employee – yet alone specifically to a sports coach – was left at best implicit in weaker responses. Slightly better responses hinted at the benefits without ever

getting to an explanation, with phrases such as 'Make you feel confident as you know where everything is' 'so they know the business standards' 'meet people and get to know his surroundings'. With an 'explain' question such as this it is the 'why' that is important.

There were some very good applied responses. Candidates linked the health and safety part of the induction to the need for this where a lot of potentially dangerous equipment was involved or in knowing evacuation procedures so that they could keep clients safe. Also the need to know the layout of the sports centre was justified in that they did not get lost, turn up for classes late and so give a poor impression of the centre. On a broader level, the idea of feeling comfortable in the workplace was linked to an improved performance overall.

2(e) All too often candidates tended to state the consequences, rather than analyse them, with the result that they were limited to a low level 2 mark. There were many assertions such as 'they might not get the right candidate', 'customers may not come any more' or 'staff might feel demotivated'. However, the actual consequences of the first one – and the real link between the second two and a lack of an effective procedure - were often missing. There were some good responses that provided these missing links. Effects on staff through seeing that someone was unfairly appointed (or not) were linked to loss of motivation and then also to customers. Many comments were also made about the possibility of being taken to court or industrial tribunals. Most of the responses were kept within the realms of realism and did not end with the complete closure of the organisation!

Question 3

3(a) Many responses did not answer the actual question well enough to score above 2-3 marks. A large proportion of candidates tended to merely describe what happened at each stage in rather general terms, for example ' the discussion/letter will let him know where he stands'. The fact that a discussion can be two ways was largely ignored. Although some candidates did pick this up and suggest that they might discuss the reasons why this was happening, all too often it was seen purely as a tool for telling the employee off – but in a nice way so he would not be offended. This was a rather simplistic view of a quite sophisticated tool. The overriding impression from candidates is that the disciplinary process is there to frighten the candidate fairly rather than to help him improve. Although in the case of the written warning this is true to a larger extent, this did not come across. A few candidates did suggest that the written warning would provide proof if the candidate was eventually sacked, but its importance in achieving a successful outcome – i.e. perhaps providing evidence to uphold the decision – was not addressed. This was also the case with the discussion – although some candidates did suggest that it might help an employee change their ways, this was about the limit.

3(b) Annual leave is a topic that has been poorly answered in the past, this series was no exception. It is an area where candidates need to be made aware of the reality of business life; closing down the whole place for a few weeks so employees can take their holiday is not seen as an option for them. Although many did see that giving the employees some sort of choice, whilst placing some restriction on when they could choose, would be the best step, most responses did not get much further than this. It would be really useful for candidates to have knowledge of how different organisations tackle this issue – use of a rota and plenty of advance warning for example. Although these ideas were expressed by a few, it was a small minority and even then tended to be stated rather than providing detail of how they actually worked.

3(c) There were many thoughtful responses here, almost equally divided between the two leaders – both choices led to a maximum mark response on at least one occasion. Josh was the more popular, with the justification often hinging on the need to prepare the activities before 9am. This was backed up by the fact that he was dealing with volunteers who might not have experience so may not be able to contribute much. The need for careful direction for children in their activities was also given. Tracey was seen as being far more likely to engender a team spirit in the volunteers (many pointed out they didn't have to be there) with possible knock-on effects to the children. The purpose of the activities – for children to enjoy in the summer – was also cited as a reason why Josh might not be the more suitable, with the best responses indicating that with so many activities (and children!) she would have her work cut out anyway without having to make decisions for everyone else all the time.

There was some slight confusion in justifying Josh, suggesting that he would be a leader more than Tracey just by the fact that he is autocratic – there was misunderstanding that 'laissez-faire' is also a leadership style.

3(d)(i) Responses were slightly disappointing. A considerable number of responses were very imprecise, simply stating that having different jobs would be good for her and that she would enjoy it and feel motivated – but there was very limited analysis as to why this might be the case. Many simply said what job rotation is or asserted that it would motivate her 'because she is doing different things'. Vague statements such as 'it would show that her opinions are being valued' and 'it's what she wants' were made to justify the candidate's statements without any link as to why this might be the case.

Responses tended to be fairly positive and there were some sound attempts to apply the information about Arka to the method. Some very good responses suggested a problem when she returns to desk if there were no other vacancies elsewhere and she had found another role she wanted to do. Overall, however, responses were positive on the use of this method when perhaps they should have been less so. Someone with sound qualifications may not want to have to do more jobs at the same level, an element of job rotation that escaped many candidates. Many considered that she might just be put on to sports coaching to

suit her qualifications which are not totally what would happen. Responses should always consider both sides and not automatically assume that the suggested method is the best one. Candidates should also consider the issue from the employers' side – it should be evaluated as an organisational tool and not just from the employee point of view. Occasionally the possible issues that the company might face were tackled- the possibility that she might not be as good at other jobs or that she would need training. The issue of her not being at reception, possibly impacting on customer service as she was good at it, was only occasionally put forward.

3(d)(ii) Appraisals were generally well understood by candidates and most could at least adequately address how, as well as why, they were given. Candidates should be aware that occasionally a little more precision in language is needed 'they could tell them how they thought they were getting on' does not identify who is doing the talking or who it is about! As in previous series, there is still a small, but significant, minority of candidates who believe that it is simply telling employees that they have done well – 'praising them'.

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