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Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

**Professional Development Scheme**

**Specialist Personnel and Development**

**Managing the Training and  
Development Function**

**November 2007**

**8 November 2007      13:50-16:00 hrs**

**Time allowed - Two hours and ten minutes**  
(including ten minutes' reading time)

**Answer Section A and SEVEN of the ten questions in Section B.**

**Please write clearly and legibly.**

**Questions may be answered in any order.**

**Equal marks are allocated to each section of the paper.**  
**Within Section B equal marks are allocated to each question.**

**If a question includes reference to 'your organisation', this may be interpreted as covering any organisation with which you are familiar.**

**The case study is not based on an actual company. Any similarities to known organisations are accidental.**

**You will fail the examination if:**

- **you fail to answer seven questions in Section B and/or**
- **you achieve less than 40 per cent in any section.**

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### SECTION A – Case Study

*Note: It is permissible to make assumptions by adding to the case study details given below provided the essence of the case study is neither changed nor undermined in any way by what is added.*

WeDoHR plc is a consultancy offering a range of Human Resource [HR] services to clients, including advice on pay, benefits and pensions, and on performance management. A global company, with activities in several countries, it employs 800 people in the UK, the majority of whom are client-facing.

There is a central HR department, which has two principal functions. The first is to provide support and specialist expertise to client-facing people and the second is to manage internal support services. Learning and Development (L&D) is part of the central HR department, though most of their activities are within the organisation.

L&D activity is based on an annual business plan which is issued by the UK Board in January each year. L&D consultants liaise with the client-facing business units to establish learning needs related to the achievement of operational goals. At an individual level, personal objectives are set based on departmental plans, and learning needs are identified through an annual review.

As with many consultancy organisations, the priority for client-facing people is to earn fees, and they are set challenging financial goals. They are reluctant to spend time attending training as this is seen as 'wasted time'; similarly, the annual review is seen as rather a chore, with more attention based on agreeing rewards than on discussing development. This means that, at best, L&D activities focus on short-term needs, with little attention being paid to succession and career planning.

The current company strategy is to outsource design and delivery of formal training, which takes the form of courses and workshops, and the company also subscribes to e-learning packages which are available on the intranet. Theoretically, the L&D Manager remains responsible for all other aspects of the training cycle and for the management of resources.

However, the manager is facing a number of challenges. The level of last-minute cancellations and 'no shows' on centrally organised events has reached an unacceptable level and this results in payments to external providers without the identified learning needs being met. There is also a growing demand for 1:1 coaching, which is seen as cost-effective by the internal customers of the L&D function, but is costly to fund and difficult to evaluate. Many of the business units also appear to be making their own arrangements with external suppliers and then charging these to the L&D budget without consultation. There is little in the way of co-ordinated evaluation.

The L&D Manager wants to bring costs back within budget and establish a more systematic and robust evaluation strategy. He has asked for your recommendations, as a training and development professional.

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Drawing on your knowledge of research and wider organisational practice, prepare a brief report for the L&D Manager, with your analysis of the options and your justified recommendations on each of the following:

1. The steps that can be taken to rationalise and gain some control over the external provision of training without alienating the business units
  
2. The pros and cons of developing or recruiting internal L&D consultants who are capable of coaching, compared with using external suppliers
  
3. Justified options for an evaluation strategy which could be used in the management of all external suppliers, as well as internal L&D activities.

*You should spend equal amounts of time on these three tasks.*

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

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### SECTION B

Answer SEVEN of the ten questions in this section. To communicate your answers more clearly you may use whatever methods you wish, for example diagrams, flowcharts, bullet points, so long as you provide an explanation of each.

1. As Training Manager (TM) you are under considerable pressure to prove the value of all your training interventions in financial terms.  
Analyse what you consider to be the principal weaknesses and challenges of an evaluation strategy based purely on cost-benefit analysis.
2. As TM explain and justify the steps you can take to ensure that the trainers in your team develop a good understanding of the company's business strategy and priorities.
3. In an organisation where there is a policy of using line managers to run some training courses, what can the TM do to ensure that these courses are effective and why?
4. All too often, training records are left to gather dust in filing cabinets.  
Justify, with examples, how the use of historical information about training and development (T&D) activities can be used to help the TM develop a marketing strategy for the T&D function.
5. Drawing on your knowledge of wider organisational practice, explain and justify how an understanding of an organisation's competency framework can help the Learning and Development (L&D) Manager to develop L&D Strategy.
6. A six-month management training programme you have set up includes optional access to a coach at any stage during or after the programme.  
Use your knowledge of research and wider organisational practice to justify how you will evaluate this coaching initiative.
7. A major restructuring exercise is about to take place in an organisation, in response to changing customer needs. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has asked you, as the TM:  
  
"What kind of contribution could you and your team make towards making this restructuring as effective as possible?"  
  
Provide a justified response.
8. Using your own organisation to illustrate your answer, identify some of the ethical dilemmas that could occur if the TM or a senior member of the L&D team were to act as a coach to line managers.

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9. A change of focus from 'training' to 'learning' could change the responsibilities for creating effective people management strategies and processes. Use your knowledge of research to discuss the challenges this would create for the TM.

10. As TM, you have received the following email from a departmental Line Manager:

"I understand that your department is considering the development of an in-house training programme for first line managers. This is all very well, but surely we would be better off if we brought in some external specialists? Besides, it would probably cost less in the longer term."

Provide a reasoned and justified response.

**END OF EXAMINATION**

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### Introduction

November 2007		
Grade	Number	Percentage of total (to 1 decimal point)
Distinction	2	4.3
Merit	11	23.4
Pass	16	34
Marginal Fail	4	8.5
Fail	14	29.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>

*The figures shown are simply calculations based on the number of candidates sitting the examination in November 2007, whether for the first or a subsequent time, and are for interest only. They are not to be confused with the statistics produced by CIPD headquarters, which are based on the performance of candidates sitting the examination for the first time. It is from these figures that the national average pass rates are calculated.*

The overall pass rate was 61.7%, of which 45% was at Merit or Distinction level. The highest mark was 73% and the lowest was 23%.

The performance was fairly consistent across both sections of the paper, with a 62% pass rate on Section A and 60% pass rate for Section B. There was a greater variation in the marks for Section B, with the highest mark at 79% and the lowest at 11%. For Section A the highest mark was 70% and the lowest 30%.

The most disappointing aspect was the number of candidates who were attempting the paper for at least the second time and whose answers were well below the pass standard. 90% of first time takers passed, but only 17% of re-sits. (This is unusual as most candidates who fail succeed at the second attempt, providing they prepare adequately.) All candidates are strongly advised to practise on past papers, with reference to the examiner's reports, so that they clearly understand what is required and can prepare accordingly.

It is good to see that the pass reports are showing more evidence of wider reading. Detailed feedback follows.

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### Section A

As always with case studies in the exam for this elective, I was looking for a professional but realistic response to this situation and these particular questions. This always requires a carefully considered, and justified, response to the actual situation described rather than a text book response.

On this occasion, the overall requirement was for a report addressed to the Learning and Development (L&D) Manager. The better scripts followed this format and provided a summary of the main issues to be tackled (which was more than just a summary of the facts provided in the case study). Key words in the overall requirement were 'analysis of options' and 'justified recommendations', and this needed to be applied to all three of the questions, which progressively tackle some of the key issues in the situation.

### Task 1

This first task asked for suggestions as to the steps that could be taken to rationalise and gain some control over the external provision of training without alienating the business units. The most important point to make is that no Training and Development (T&D) professional would start to make recommendations without first, systematically and objectively, finding out what is actually happening now.

The better answers did exactly this. They proposed a review or audit of all the external suppliers, to establish the facts about who they are, what they supply and for whom, the costs of using them and any feedback, before approaching the line managers (LMs). For the next step, it is important to take a collaborative approach with a strong focus on benefits to the business, as the line managers are likely to be quickly alienated if they perceive that they are losing their budget and freedom to 'do their own thing' without some early discussion and consultation. Prior knowledge of costs, duplication and any other problems will be necessary if this approach is to succeed.

The better papers went on to propose how to control suppliers in the future. For example, one effective process may be to set up a project group (including some LMs) to agree some criteria for selecting external suppliers and then agree specific contracts.

The poorer answers missed the first essential step of establishing the facts before leaping into action. Instead many just took a trainer-centred approach, starting with an organisational needs analysis and some heavy-handed steps to take control of the budgets and force the line managers to obey rules. This demonstrates a lack of understanding of the political implications of alienating line managers.

Other weaknesses were a general lack of justification for what amounted to just a list of bullet points. We are of course interested in *what* needs to be done; but we are also interested in *how* to proceed and *why* certain actions are proposed.

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### Task 2

This tackled another of the main issues in the case study. That is, the increasing demand for coaching. A Training Manager (TM) faced with this situation will need to consider the pros and cons of developing or recruiting internal consultants who are capable of coaching, compared with using external suppliers, before making some justified recommendations.

Arguments for would centre around flexibility, costs, and understanding of organisational culture and issues and the development of expertise useful for the longer term. One of the advantages of coaching is getting it at the right time, so having an internal resource would be beneficial. The logistics of booking coaching sessions for a range of individuals in different parts of the business with an external supplier could be quite daunting. Arguments against internal coaches would centre around credibility, objectivity and confidentiality.

The weaker answers just provided a limited analysis of pros and cons, often in table form, with brief bullet points, but no explanation or rationale for the points made, no links to the case study organisation, no options proposed and no justified recommendations. It also seems that many candidates lack real understanding of the realities of coaching.

### Task 3

A further challenge in the case study situation is to propose justified options for an effective evaluation strategy, encompassing both the management of external suppliers and evaluation of internal L&D activities.

A key part of any evaluation strategy would be to agree, for any intervention, some specific learning objectives based on clear outcomes, expectations or performance criteria, and some measurable success criteria. This would apply to internal as well as external strategies and interventions. Many of the weaker scripts overlooked this key requirement for any form of evaluation.

Similarly, the evaluation strategy would need to include such practicalities as clear selection criteria for external suppliers and perhaps service level agreements.

This was the weakest section of many of the answers. Weaknesses in scripts were a focus on methods without any overall strategic framework for evaluation, answers limited to general points (for example, the need to align L&D to business strategy, and to make evaluation consistent) without any recommendations as to how this is to be achieved. Many answers were limited to an explanation of Kirkpatrick's 4 stages of evaluation, which would be well known even to Certificate level candidates, without suggestions as to how this would apply in this situation.

Candidates at the PDS level should be familiar with a number of different frameworks for evaluation and should be capable of selecting from these to put together a strategy appropriate for each situation. This strategy would need to include



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measures of efficiency (for example, use of resources) and effectiveness (for example, outcomes).

There is no shortage of literature and current research on L&D strategy, coaching and evaluation on which to draw, but this was not evident in the majority of scripts.

### Section B

The least popular questions were Question 6 (evaluation of coaching), Question 1 (cost-benefit/evaluation strategy), Question 9 (challenges for TM in 'training to learning' shift) and Question 8 (ethical dilemmas).

The pass rate on Section B questions varied between 40% and 72%, but for most questions the pass rate was roughly in line with the overall pass rate. Again, it was good to see so many Distinction and Merit level answers to all ten of the Section B questions, with the achievement of a mark of 85% or over achieved in all questions. At the other end of the scale, there were some very poor marks, and we had no option but to give the minimum mark of 0% for 2 of the questions (not to the same candidate). There was a wide range of marks for all questions, and there were big differences between those who passed with good marks and those whose answers were inadequate (that is, there were few border-line marks).

### Question 1

The question asked for an analysis of the principal weaknesses and challenges of an evaluation strategy based purely on cost-benefit analysis. The straightforward answer is that this approach can only be used effectively if there are 'hard' or financial measures for all training/ learning activity, as it takes no account of 'soft' or qualitative factors. As this is seldom the case, an evaluation strategy should always include a broader range of methods and measures.

The better answers made this point and illustrated their answers with examples of what can or can't be measured financially, stressing the need for a balanced evaluation strategy, which measures both quantitative and qualitative outcomes.

The main challenges for the TM are to ensure that clear outcome based objectives are set for all interventions and to sell the benefits of the more qualitative outcomes, such as behaviours, morale, team-working, customer service, leadership etc.

Apart from a few candidates who did not answer the question at all, and clearly did not know anything about cost-benefit or evaluation, the majority of even the poorer answers made some valid general points. However they failed to illustrate their answers with specific points and examples.

Only twenty three candidates attempted this question; 61% passed, the majority at Merit or Distinction level. The highest mark was 85% and the lowest was 10%.

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### Question 2

Most candidates seem to recognise the need for L&D activities to be aligned to the business strategy. They are much more vague as to how this is to be achieved. So this question was concerned with steps the TM can take to ensure that all trainers develop a good understanding of the company's business strategy and priorities.

Practical suggestions would include:

- regularly discussing these at team meetings
- setting personal objectives in line with the company's business strategies and ensuring that all training interventions focus on them
- negotiating line management sponsorship of training interventions
- encouraging various ways for trainers to network in order to understand business priorities.

The better answers explained why it was so vital for trainers to have this understanding and gave a range of practical suggestions. The weakest answers gave very limited responses, often focusing on just the passing on of information and internal training team activities, overlooking the broader need to network and collaborate with line managers and others across the organisation. A few candidates failed to answer the question, focusing instead on what the trainers needed to know instead of how the TM could ensure they acquire the understanding.

Forty two candidates attempted this question, of whom 64% passed, the majority at Merit or Distinction level. The highest mark was 85% and the lowest 15%.

### Question 3

The question concerned the TM's activities in ensuring that courses are effective when run by line managers. In a way, the line managers become an extension of the T&D function, so the TM has responsibility for ensuring their performance. There are two key strands to this:

- Working with the line managers to
  - discuss the purpose and learning objectives of the courses and agree evaluation criteria
  - collaborate on the learning design, materials etc.
  - provide coaching, feedback and support as necessary in terms of trainer skills
- Setting up processes to ensure effective transfer of learning, such as
  - selection and briefing of delegates
  - follow up and evaluation in the workplace
  - analysis of feedback

The better answers provided coherent answers reflecting these two main themes, with personal examples or reference to published research. The poorer answers tended to just focus on ensuring that the line managers have appropriate training skills, ignoring other areas.

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Forty six candidates attempted this question, making it the most popular question. It also had the highest pass rate - 72%, two-thirds of whom gained Merit or Distinction level. The highest mark was 85% and the lowest 15%.

### Question 4

The question asked for justification and examples on how historical information about T&D activities can be used in developing a marketing strategy for the T&D function.

I expected answers to demonstrate understanding of the purpose of marketing strategy (which will usually summarise what products/services are to be promoted to which customer, when, where, how etc.). I also expected some specific examples of historical information, with justification on how it could help in developing the marketing strategy.

For example, training records may tell you

- what courses/ initiatives have been popular (so they may feature in future plans)
- who has attended, and from what part of the business (so that the satisfaction of this group of internal customers and their future needs can be established)
- what feedback/ reaction has been like.

Depending on the design of evaluation, even course reaction questionnaires should also give information on the relevance, usefulness and transferability of training. Feedback may also give an indication of other learning needs for which solutions can be developed – or other organisational issues and blockages which need to be tackled (for example, by evidence of last minute cancellations or withdrawals). Analysis may also provide some clues about who to target from people who have NOT been customers or sponsors.

The better answers defined marketing strategy and then gave examples of how information could lead to defining the marketing mix to be developed for various customer segments. Many of the poorer answers were confined to explaining what records might be available but without making the link to the development of the marketing strategy.

Thirty eight candidates attempted this question. 58% passed, two-thirds at Merit or Distinction level. The highest mark was 90% and the lowest 0%, indicating the range of marks allocated.

### Question 5

The question related to the use of an organisation's competency framework in the development of L&D Strategy. There was a specific requirement for the answer to draw on knowledge of wider organisational practice (that is, to give examples from other organisations).

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First of all, I expected answers to indicate understanding of what a competency framework is and its purpose in an organisation. For example, it will usually reflect the competencies that are essential for the interpretation and delivery of the organisation's mission and strategy, and as such gives a strong indication of the skills, knowledge, behaviours and priorities for performance. Competencies will usually be defined for key people, such as managers, and may well extend to cover the entire work-force. They will usually be reflected in the performance review process.

It follows that any Training Needs Analysis (TNA), at organisational, departmental or individual level should use this framework as one of the reference points, that any training interventions should link to and build or develop the required competencies, and that the learning and development strategy, including allocation of resources, should reflect this connection.

Even the weaker answers demonstrated some broad understanding of competency frameworks, but they failed to make the connection to the development of an L& D strategy. Many overlooked the need to provide examples.

Thirty one candidates attempted this question. 58% passed, over two-thirds at Merit or Distinction level. The highest mark was 85% and the lowest 15%.

### Question 6

This question concerned the evaluation of an optional coaching initiative, which formed part of a management training programme. There was a request for the use of research to justify any suggestions. Any evaluation would be complicated by the confidentiality agreements which usually form part of a coaching relationship, and a lot would depend on the objectives of the programme.

The better answers recognised these general points and made some valid suggestions, with reference to current research and/or examples from named organisations.

For example, at a practical level, the TM can monitor:

- how many people take up the option
- how often they meet
- satisfaction with the arrangement (that is, has it been seen to be effective by the participants?).

Given the current level of interest in coaching, it was disappointing that the question was only attempted by ten candidates, making this the least popular question. Four candidates (40%) passed, all at Merit or Distinction level. The highest mark was 90% and the lowest 10%.

### Question 7

This question concerned the contribution of the training team to effective organisational change, and asked for justified suggestions. Any major disruption such as a restructuring is likely to have an unsettling effect on everyone, lead to

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uncertainty and low morale and undermine the effective performance of individuals and teams. Communication is key; ensuring that people know what is happening and have the opportunity to express uncertainties and to contribute. The TM, who is likely to have the trust of many people, can help by playing a part in developing and implementing the communication strategy, acting both formally and informally. As an individual, the TM can also act informally to support individuals and line managers.

Re-structuring may also result in changes to job roles, so at a practical level the TM can contribute to the TNA process and ensure that initiatives are set in place for individuals, teams or employee groups as appropriate.

The better answers gave some comprehensive and justified suggestions. The weaker answers saw the training role as restricted to just running courses in any new skills required and missed the broader contribution that could be made by the training team to communications, facilitation of discussion about concerns etc.

Thirty six candidates attempted this question, of whom 69% passed, three-quarters at Merit or Distinction. The highest mark was 85% and the lowest 25%.

### Question 8

The question concerned the likely ethical dilemmas that could occur if the TM or a senior member of the L&D team were to act as a coach to line managers. Candidates were asked to illustrate their answers in relation to their own organisations.

The main issue in any coaching relationship is the need for trust, mutual respect and confidentiality. The managers may initially be nervous about the confidentiality and capabilities of the TM, so trust and respect will need to be established at an early stage. In terms of ethical dilemmas, it would put the TM in a difficult situation if the discussion revealed serious competency or performance deficiencies or stories about the incompetence or inappropriate behaviour of others. Similarly the TM may already have confidential information from the organisation about future plans likely to affect the individual, which of course must not influence the discussion.

The weaker candidates overlooked the own organisation aspect of the question. Many also failed to get to grips with the substantial ethical issues, and wrote about a range of peripheral issues, such as equality, which gained some points, but missed the core part of the question.

Twenty nine candidates attempted the question, with a pass rate of 69%. There were some excellent answers, with over 80% of the Pass answers being at Merit or Distinction level. The highest mark was 90%, the lowest 25%.

### Question 9

There is much written about the shift from 'training' to 'learning' and many candidates seemed to be aware of this. However, they were more vague about how this is to be achieved and the implications for Training Managers. The question asked for reference to research in discussing the challenges for the TM, especially in the

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context of the creation of effective people management strategies and processes. There is no shortage of current research from the CIPD alone to draw on.

I expected answers to provide some clarification of what this change of focus actually means in practice, and this is much more than just adding in some coaching or e-learning. The principle of being less trainer-focused and more learner-centred reflects a shift of perception from a number of people, including individuals and line managers as well as trainers. It has been recognised for some time that people have the potential to learn all the time and not just when being trained; but the reality is that this is hard to achieve when faced with results-driven managers and operational stresses. New processes have to be embedded throughout the organisation, to be used by line managers and individuals. It is this lack of direct control over learning processes and the learning environment that provides the greatest challenge, as the TM has to work by influence and collaboration. As one candidate summarised, *"TM's need to rise to the challenge of developing managers who can develop people"*.

The TM has to help and persuade line managers to use the work-place as a learning environment, to provide opportunities to learn and practise, feedback and coaching and they have to collaborate with HR colleagues about the content and emphasis of any performance management systems. They have to help and encourage individuals to become less reliant and more autonomous learners. Finally they have to develop their trainers to build on classroom skills and become learning consultants (although one could argue that effective trainers were always learner-centred).

There were a few excellent answers, but many missed some important aspect. Some cited the research without linking it to the actual question, some got diverted into suggesting more creative ways to meet the needs of individual learners and some overlooked the need to refer to the research.

Twenty seven candidates attempted the question; with the low pass rate of only 44%. Given the amount written about this topic this is very disappointing. The highest mark was 85% and the lowest 20%.

### Question 10

This is a perfectly reasonable request from a line manager and any TM should be prepared to provide a 'reasoned and justified response' as the question required. I expected answers to be in the form of an email in language suitable for a senior line manager, dealing objectively (and not defensively) with the issues of both cost and external expertise.

Important points to include were

- benefits of using internal trainers
- constructive arguments regarding costs/ value added
- propositions for collaboration with line managers to ensure their concerns could be taken into account..

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Few candidates responded in the appropriate format, many were defensive in terms of language and the arguments made lacked justification. Nevertheless, of the eighty candidates who attempted the question, 74% passed, two-thirds at Merit or Distinction level. The highest mark was 80% and the lowest 25%.

### General comments

My comments on this occasion are similar to those made on past occasions, but they are important points and are worth making to another diet of candidates, as it would appear that the messages are not getting through to everyone.

It is very evident from the performance on Section A that many candidates fail to read the questions carefully. Instead of providing answers which were tailored to answer the actual questions asked, and to deal with the actual situation presented, far too many candidates simply launched into a text-book rant about what the case study organisation should be doing. In Section B, candidates often failed to answer all parts of question or failed to recognise what was actually being asked for (for example, critical review; discussion etc.). This is simply poor exam technique, perhaps highlighted by an inability to focus knowledge on the actual questions asked.

Just providing a list of bullet points may gain a few marks, but all questions in Section B will require more than this. Far too many candidates simply list bullet points, with no introduction, so the answers lack coherence and often miss critical instructions such as 'discuss', 'justify' or 'analyse'. The same applies in Section A.

Previous papers and examiners' reports are freely available and the CIPD web-site provides a range of useful material, including case studies and research findings, so all candidates attempting this exam should take advantage of these materials, both to practice exam technique and to make sure that their knowledge extends beyond just theory.

As on previous exam diets, even the weakest scripts demonstrated some knowledge of the various topics, but some also revealed an inability to apply this knowledge to the various contexts in the questions. For example, the message that learning and development strategy must be aligned to business strategy and priorities has got through, but weaker candidates are unable to explain and justify how this is to be achieved.

Candidates do indeed need to make sure they understand some basic principles, but they need to go much further, in order to demonstrate that they understand what this means. They need to be able to define or explain some of the key principles of training management, and to illustrate with specific examples how to apply them in practice, in different situations. General knowledge of T&D principles is insufficient in tackling this paper. Candidates should ensure that not only are they aware of topical issues, such as coaching and the shift from training to learning, but that they understand what this really means and the practical implications for the Manager of the T&D function.

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It is notable when reviewing the results that the centres who set challenging assignments get better exam results. Assignments, if well specified at post-graduate level, also help students to develop the skills of justification, analysis and critique, and of referencing their work with appropriate examples from research and contemporary practice.

Although it is a practical paper, candidates should also keep in mind that it is at post-graduate level. It is therefore a fundamental requirement that answers should include reference to research or wider organisational practice, providing specific examples to illustrate points being made. This is more than just a question of mentioning names of companies or of books/articles. It should be clear what points you are trying to make with your examples.

On this occasion candidates were particularly weak in answering questions on developing L&D strategy, developing marketing strategy for the training function and evaluation strategy.

**Diana Warren**

Examiner