CONTENTS

Cambridge Career Awards in Business - Advanced

BUSINESS ORGANISATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Paper 5171

General comments

Centres are advised to ensure that the written work submitted by candidates is legible and well presented. There is no doubt that a clearly written script (preferable using black ink or ballpoint pen) helps the Examiner. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the Examiner is able to read the script and find the relevant answers, otherwise marks could be lost.

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The quality of paper in some answer books or the type of ink in the pens used made some scripts very difficult to read. The words showed through on to the other side of the page and were then obliterated by the writing of other answers. Sometimes the ink was so faded that it was very difficult to decipher what had been written. In some other scripts the writing was so illegible as to be unreadable. Examiners can only give credit to answers that they are able to read. Candidates could lose marks if the Examiner is unable to read the script or if the candidate fails to state that part of the answer is on a different page. It is very difficult to mark scripts where the answers are not separated by lines or spaces or where the task and pages are not numbered. Marks may in fact be lost if the Examiner is unable to find the relevant responses in a poorly presented script. It is, therefore essential that Centres stress the importance of well-organised and legible work when preparing their candidates for assessment.

General comments on the Question Paper

The Examination Paper was of the same level as previously but the standard of candidates' responses was a cause for some concern. All the tasks not only relate to the assessment objectives but they clearly reflect, quite deliberately, the issues raised in the case study. Many responses were direct quotes from the Case Study without sufficient reference to the context of the tasks. As a result some responses offered irrelevant material that added little or nothing to the explanations of the issues. There were a number of scripts containing misinterpretations and inadequate application of knowledge.

Care needs to be exercised in selecting candidates for entry to the examination. Some candidates would be better advised to attempt the Standard Level first before trying the Advanced Level Paper. Centres are advised to consider carefully the potential of their candidates. The Advanced Level examination requires the demonstration of more knowledge and the ability to discuss issues than the Standard Level Paper. Tutors should ensure that their candidates are well practised in examination technique.

Candidates must be encouraged to:

- read the Examiner's instructions very carefully
- ensure they fully understand what the Examiner wants them to do
- lay out their responses clearly and in an orderly manner
- note the allocation of marks to each task and respond accordingly
- manage the examination time sensibly
- respond to each task in context ie refer to the case study in the answer.

The above points represent sound advice and a candidate's failure to observe them is likely to cost valuable marks. For some it is the difference between passing or failing. The layout of the scripts was generally much better than hitherto; it helps the process of assessment when the responses are laid out clearly.

Candidates are given fifteen minutes in which to read and become acquainted with the contents of the Case Study and the Paper. Tutors should direct their candidates on how to make effective use of those fifteen minutes.

Comments on specific questions

Task 1

(a) This task was generally quite well done indicating a firm appreciation of the ways in which additional capital can be raised. The list needed to be realistic and it was expected that candidates would choose from debentures, bank loan, venture capital, and particularly ploughed-back profits and the sale of the unissued shares. The choice of the latter two items would indicate a clear grasp of the problem and an understanding of the Case Study. There were, however, candidates who offered fund raising activities and government grants and clearly had little idea of the situation.

(b) The responses were disappointing and tended to be awarded 2/5 marks simply because candidates directly lifted their answers out of paragraph 3 lines 12-18 in the Case. Although only 5 points were available the point needed to be developed and reinforced. Being socially aware reflected the attitude of the business organisation [HCI] in putting something back into the community – cheap or free medical care was provided in the text but candidates needed to suggest the provision of employment and training which would raise the general quality of life of the local population.

(c) This task demanded more attention since 10 marks were available. The clues were clearly set out in the text. Most candidates recognised the issues but tended to copy material directly from the source Case. Very few extended the discussion beyond the obvious points. What was really required, particularly if marks were to be awarded in excess of 6 or 7, was the appreciation of the 'knock-on' effect i.e. how employment and health care would benefit the whole community. HCI's approach would improve both the level of health and the standard of living. The additional pay would help to fuel the economy and in turn create more jobs. Training would need to be offered to get people into work and that would extend the local skills base. Most responses addressed the basic issue but did not expand upon it.

Task 2

(a) This task asked the candidate to define *either* autocratic *or* democratic leadership style. The majority of scripts contained answers to *both*. The Examiner was entitled to mark the first answer regardless of its quality but both answers were assessed and the better answer allowed. This was a case of candidates not reading the task's instructions. In the main the leadership style was considered with little or no reference to the Quetta hospital. Marks were awarded for the strength of the answer even if the context was weak. The main point that needed to emerge regarding autocratic leadership was that there was a belief by those in authority in the Quetta hospital, except the Director, that only they were fit to take decisions. Democratic leadership was generally better explained but certain key words were missing like participation, trust, and delegation.

(b) The task tended to challenge candidates simply because their interpretation of the activity was weak. There were few good answers. The key was to be found in lines 12-13 of the text i.e. 'Each hospital operates as a separate profit centre', the implication being that the hospitals held the authority to run as businesses within the main HCI enterprise. Geographical spread and size, and clear control could have been considered. The response could have been for or against the notion that HCI was decentralised, the marks depended upon the perception and the explanation. Most answers dealt with a general definition of decentralisation.

(c) This task was specifically targeted on MacGregor's Theory Y and Herzberg's job enrichment. It was a 10 mark task but few candidates were awarded more than 5/10. Along with Theory Y many candidates tended to add Theory X which was not required. Equally, the mention of Herzberg encouraged candidates to rehearse all they knew about the Two-Factor Theory which, again, was not called for. Clearly some definition of Theory Y was expected but better marks were awarded to those who recognised the implication in the text that at Quetta there was an unacceptable view that only the higher status appointments could be Theory Y. Very few attempted to define job enrichment although occasionally there were some references to increasing responsibility.

Task 3

(a) Only a small number of candidates recognised the essential benefit of job sharing in the context of Quetta hospital. Mindful of the location of Quetta, the job sharer i.e. the part-timer, was able to take on other work like, for example, helping with the harvest. The text indicated that many unemployed unskilled workers found employment and one way in which the hospital could meet its mission statement was to offer jobs. Job sharing enabled more in a community to work and earn money. The term job share was often confused with shift system.

(b) The code of conduct was well defined as rules and regulations and an asset but many picked up on the issue of hazardous waste. The task needed some development such as reference to behaviour, hospital routines, and personal standards.

(c) This task was essentially in two parts: the provision of suitable and safe conditions of work and then the identification of one other expectation employees might have of their employers. A number of responses confused the employees with the employers. The 'suitable and safe' conditions were mostly rehearsed from the text although some candidates talked about it in general terms. The second element was all too often a list of different expectations, all quite reasonable however, but although this approach was not asked for it was acknowledged in the assessment process.

Task 4

(a)(i) Pressure groups were mostly well understood but where most responses fell short was in the impact on HCI or on the Quetta hospital in particular. Many recognised that the hospital was criticised for exploiting cheap labour but it was necessary to suggest how the business could be affected by any action by a pressure group eg strikes, closure, Government enquiry, poor image, loss of business.

(ii) Disposable income was not well understood, at least not in the context of HCI. For many candidates the issue was entirely related to the local community whilst ignoring the wider picture i.e. if potential patients were affected by diminishing disposable income then it might mean fewer people being able to exercise choice in their health care. On the other hand, an increase in disposable income could widen HCI's patient base. The signal point to have been made was that HCI relied upon a sufficiency of people wealthy enough to buy their services. The majority of candidates referred only to a decrease in disposable income.

(b) The answer to this task was in the text and many responses relied on a copying out of the assumed appropriate passages but few were able to carry through the argument. The reason why HCI located in developing countries was because land, labour, construction and running costs were significantly lower than in the Europe and the USA. This enabled HCI to charge lower prices and still receive a good profit. HCI was able to encourage people to realise that private treatment was affordable. Being located in a developing country helped business. This task gave rise to some misunderstanding in that a number of candidates interpreted 'developing countries' to mean '*developed* countries' and talked about the availability of the high standard of skills, better communications and infrastructure.

The second part of this 10-mark task dealt with the incentives a host government might offer an inward investor like HCI. Mostly candidates understood the issue but there were still too many scripts indicating no real grasp. The task called for an indication of incentives and whilst suggesting 'tax holidays' was acceptable just saying 'subsidies' was not as such a term was unspecific. There were, however, a number of interesting contributions to this part of the task.

Task 5

(a)(i) The first of two marketing objectives focused on the range of saleable products. In marketing terms the word 'products' meant medicines, treatment, surgery - in fact anything that a patient might want from a hospital. This point was not well appreciated and the task itself was not very well tackled. The issue to pursue was that all products had to be paid for so that the hospital could achieve its aims and objectives. The marketing needed also to encourage patient confidence in the products and services of the hospital.

(ii) Image was the second focus and many missed the essential point here. It was one thing to promote an image in general terms but it was quite another to 'sell' the hospital as a world-class provider of health care. Being located in a developing country might have given the impression that standards were lower than to be found in Europe and the USA and it was essential to adjust that image.

(b)(i) The importance of a patient service policy was dealt with reasonably but predictably with so many references being made not to a hospital but to a retailer or manufacturer. Candidates needed to emphasise that mistakes could happen and lead to further illness, disability or even death. A policy needs to consider food, rooms, doctor-patient ratio and so on. People who pay for private medicine expect a higher level of service and attention. There must be procedures to avoid problems and to maintain high standards.

(ii) Candidates were asked to describe two matters which the patient service policy should contain. HCI had to attempt to foresee all what could possibly go wrong. The policy should have focused on giving patients and their families, for example, the means of raising complaints, refunds of fees, alternative or additional remedies.

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Paper 5172

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General comments on the Question Paper

Candidate performance

It is pleasing to note that there has been some improvement in this module. However, the scripts from some Centres were disappointing. There were a number of general issues which seemed to reoccur within most Centres.

The failures were mainly due to the fact that candidates had problems with the following points:

Misinterpretation of task requirements. This was very evident in a number of tasks. **Task 3 (a)** asked for an agenda to be written and the answer should have included a properly presented agenda with headings and items required. However, a large number of candidates did not follow this and wrote a range of items, which was clearly not was required.

Reluctance to comply with the task requirements. Many candidates chose to ignore exactly what was required in many tasks and generally wrote about the key subject of the task. This was mostly evident in **Task 3 (c)** which required the candidates to suggest four different types of questions and give an example of each. The majority of answers only offered different types of questions and no examples. Some candidates only gave examples of questions and did not discuss the types of questions and thus lost marks.

Format and presentation of material. Candidates should remember that this subject is about effective business communications, therefore, they should ensure that they present their answers using an appropriate format. This session, some scripts from Centres indicated that they had been working on presentation skills and this was evident in the answers presented by the candidates. However, many candidates still demonstrated very poor writing skills and their work was very difficult to read. Once again, a high number of candidates in some Centres put their answer pages together in the wrong order, without displaying the numbers of the tasks being answered, which made the Exam Papers very difficult to mark.

Poor time management. This is a problem in some Centres. Teachers should try to ensure that their candidates have an opportunity to sit a mock examination prior to the actual examination. Candidates should always remember that on this Paper, there will always be five compulsory tasks and thus candidates should be able to allocate their time accordingly. Candidates should also be encouraged to see how many marks are awarded for each task so that they can identify the type and length of response required.

Syllabus problems

It seemed that many candidates had specific problems with the following areas of the Syllabus:

Agenda contents

Characteristics of press releases

Barriers to communications

Format of formal business letters

Groupwork.

Comments on specific questions

Task 1

(a) This task required the candidates to evaluate three two-way communications methods which the committee could have used to communicate to potential sponsors. There were six marks available for this, so candidates should have realised that a relatively brief answer was required, there was one mark for each method and one mark for the evaluation and explanation of each.

The answer could have included methods such as team meetings, joint consultations, quality circles, seminars, briefings and telephone communications.

(b) This part of the task required candidates to explain four main barriers to communications which may have been experienced by the international sponsors. There were eight marks available for this, which included two marks per barrier which was explained well.

The answer could have included methods such as: no clear aim or purpose of communication; use of inappropriate language such as ‘management’ speak; staff unable to understand the message due to education/experience levels; use of inappropriate medium such as informal chats; lack of regular communication and problems with language and cultural barriers.

Many candidates only offered four barriers but did not explain them, although the task clearly required this, thus they lost marks.

(c) This part of the task required candidates to explain the characteristics of a press release. This has been on a previous Paper and should have been an easy task. There were six marks available – i.e. one mark per point and one mark per explanation.

The answer should have included characteristics such as: written for publication to different audiences – journalist and target audience; content - information needs to be newsworthy, credible; structure and style - needs to include headline, include facts, quotations, embargo date, needs to be double line spaced, include photos etc and needs to be checked internally before release, etc.

Once again, although an easy task, many candidates did not seem to either understand the question or know what was required here.

Task 2

(a) The first part of the task required the candidates to write a letter to the potential corporate sponsors with the aim of trying to get them involved with the sponsorship of the games. This was worth eight marks. The letter should have been presented formally and the content and tone of the letter should have been persuasive and inviting for the corporate sponsors. It should also have included key benefits, etc. The letter should have included a response mechanism (i.e. a fax back form or tear off reply strip).

Therefore, the letter should have included:

Letter heading of the company

Date

Reference number

Appropriate salutation – Dear Mr/Mrs

Letter Heading – Olympic Games 2008

The body/content of letter

Consideration of key benefits of sponsorship

Appropriate closure

Signature and position

Response mechanism.

In general, candidates did seem to be able to write a formal letter, however, not many included a response mechanism and the tone was not appropriate in some cases.

(b) The second part of this task required candidates to explain the structure of a formal business report. This was worth eight marks. The answer required was not a formal report layout but an explanation of the structure. Thus the following structure should have been explained:

Title

Author

Date

Reference

Contents page

Terms of reference

Aims and objectives

Body of the report – findings

Conclusion

Recommendations

Appendices.

Many candidates seemed to have difficulties with this and thus did not receive many marks.

(c) The final section of this task required the candidate to list four disadvantages of using electronic communication. This was worth four marks only and thus candidates should have realised that this was only a very small part of a task and use their time appropriately.

The answer should have included the following: emails may be deleted without reading; there is no tangible presence like a brochure to look at again; it may be perceived as not that important as it is not a traditional approach for such an important communication – therefore may not be received well; not all the target audience have access to email; documents may be too big to be sent electronically easily; documents may be too big to be printed off or read on screen; and it is difficult to create a prestigious image via email.

One of the main problems here was that many candidates misread this task and wrote about advantages rather than disadvantages and thus did not receive any marks. However, some answers were very good and seemed to indicate a good level of knowledge on this aspect of the Syllabus.

Task 3

(a) This part of the task required candidates to write an agenda for a meeting and it was worth only four marks. The answers should have been set out as a formal agenda and should have included the following: time, date, venue; welcome; apologies; approval of previous minutes of last meeting; matters arising from previous minutes; suggested job specifications; suggestions for advertising posts; timescales for recruitment process; any other business and time and venue for next meeting.

Unfortunately a number of candidates did not seem to be able to present their work as a formal agenda, thus they lost marks.

(b) This part of the task required candidates to explain what the Committee had to do to prepare for recruitment interviews. This was worth eight marks and this was broken down to one mark per point which was not expanded and two marks per point which was explained well.

The answers should have included: planning the interview; considering the purpose of interview; liasing with other members of the interview panel; considering location, timing and structure of interview; preparation of questions; consideration of methods of communicating to candidates after interviews and designing criteria for assessing each candidate.

This is often a task on the Examination Paper and candidates should have been able to answer this well. However, many candidates wrote very little and did not seem to be able to offer the points required.

(c) This part required candidates to suggest four different types of interview questions and give an example of each. This was worth eight marks, one mark for an explanation of the type of question and one mark for an example.

The answers should have included:

Closed question – offer a limited choice of answers only i.e. Do you feel that you can contribute to the Olympic Games? The candidate can only respond yes or no. It is difficult for them to supply further information.

Leading question – lead the interviewee into speaking about specific issues i.e. Why do you think that you are suitable for volunteer work?

Open question – a question which allows the interviewee the opportunity to give open, frank and in-depth information i.e. what are your strengths which you will be able to bring to the Olympics?

Hypothetical question – gives a scenario to allow the interviewee to answer in role, i.e. You are working for the Olympics and you have been asked to work elsewhere for a good salary – what would you do?

Unfortunately, many candidates lost marks here because he or she did not offer an example or just gave an example instead of explaining the type of question. Again, this is a popular task on the Paper and thus candidates need to ensure that they read and answer the question appropriately to be able to pick up all the marks.

Task 4

(a) This part of the Paper required candidates to explain four reasons why there may have been conflict within the group in the case study. This was worth eight marks – two marks per point which was explained.

The answers should have included: individual perceptions of unfair or different responsibilities for certain members of the group; inappropriate communications methods used for communication with certain groups such as informal verbal chats rather than formal 'official' information being disseminated; different ideologies about the role of the games and different beliefs about status and levels of power within the group.

Answers, in the main, were reasonable here, although some candidates did not explain points made and only offered one or two word answers. This clearly meant that they did not receive the marks available.

(b) This part of the task required the explanation of four characteristics of an effective group. This part was also worth eight marks and thus required more than just bullet point answers.

The answer should have included: structure of group; culture within group and organisation; development of trust within the group; level of support within the group; consultation and communication; involvement in decision-making; respect for members of the group and norming, forming, storming, performing.

There were a number of good answers to this task, however, in some candidate's answers there was a lack of understanding here and answers seemed to have been given off the top of their head rather than from their reading around the area.

(c) This part required candidates to suggest how the group should work more positively to be effective. This was only worth four marks and thus candidates should have apportioned their time appropriately.

The answers should have included: arranging of awaydays (where the whole group meets away from the office for an organised day of events or discussions) to get the group dynamics co-ordinated; arranging social events to develop trust and respect; ensuring that communication methods used are appropriate; offering a good level of support for the group members and ensuring that all are involved in consultation and decision making.

There were some good answers here which indicated a good understanding and application of the theory.

Task 5

(a) This final question is always related to the presentation of numerical data and this part of the task required candidates to construct a bar chart for the survey in the case study. This was worth ten marks.

Candidates were expected to present the data well and the marks were allocated for: the appropriate bar method identified and used; correct and accurate graph used; the correct values plotted; correct shaded areas to illustrate key and the clarity of chart and correct labelling.

Generally, if candidates have left enough time, this is an easy task to perform. Many candidates do plot data accurately using the graph paper which is available, however, some do not bother to use graph paper. This is a mistake.

(b)(i)(ii) (iii) This part of the task required candidates to explain the advantages and disadvantages of three graphs: a pie chart, a line graph and a table. This was worth ten marks also.

The answers should have included:

(i) *Explanation of pie charts* – total value of items must be known, use of colours to enhance impact, limited to the amount of in-depth information that can be conveyed using a pie chart, need to work out in terms of 360%.

(ii) *Explanation of line graphs* – good for showing trends, cannot readily or clearly be interpreted if too many plotted lines of information, therefore not helpful for complex information.

(iii) *Explanation of tables* – good for tabulating complex information, limited immediate visual impact and difficult to interpret readily.

In general, many candidates seemed to have run out of time and did not answer this question fully. Those who did answer the question well, used a grid displaying advantages and disadvantages for each type of graph. This is a common task and so candidates should be prepared for this type of task.

BUSINESS FINANCE

Paper 5173

General comments

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General comments on the Question Paper

It is pleasing to report that there was an improvement in the overall performance of the candidates who completed the October 2003 examination.

It was apparent that the majority of Centres had spent more time in preparing their candidates for the examination and as a result the candidates appeared to manage their time more effectively. Centres are to be congratulated for this and are urged to continue this approach in future examination sessions.

Centres are, however, reminded that in order to achieve the highest marks there is a need for precision when candidates are defining terms or providing explanations of terms. Also, it is necessary to remind Centres that when candidates are undertaking calculations it is advisable for them to provide a formula or explanation as to *how* the calculation has been carried out. If candidates fail to do this they are likely to lose marks, especially if they make an error in their workings.

Both of the above points have been referred to in previous reports and Centres are urged to bring these issues to the attention of their candidates in order to ensure that they achieve the highest rewards for their efforts.

Comments on specific questions

Task 1

Overall the answers to this task (**(a)** – **(d)**) were very satisfactory with most candidates able to provide reasonable explanations of the terms. This would appear to show that Centres are providing instruction across the breadth of the Syllabus and are providing candidates with precise definitions of financial terms. Centres are to be congratulated for this and are urged to continue to stress the need for precision.

In answering part **(a)** some candidates adopted a general approach to PEST factors rather than focusing on the factors outlined in the case study and as a result they did not achieve the full award. Candidates should be encouraged to refer to the case study, where appropriate, in their responses to the tasks.

When answering part **(e)** some candidates confused the term ‘sale and return’ with ‘sale and leaseback’ and as a result they were not awarded any marks.

Centres are urged to recommend to their candidates that they read the tasks very carefully in order to be able to produce responses that are totally relevant and accurate.

Task 2

This task produced many very good responses with a sizeable minority of candidates achieving full marks.

Most candidates were capable of identifying three of the terms in part **(a)** but it was of concern that many candidates could not identify **(d)** as assets employed.

The answers to part **(b)** were in the main very good but there was some confusion, especially from the weaker candidates, as to whether existing shareholders should be classified as internal or external users of accounting information.

Task 3

Overall the responses to this task were satisfactory with most candidates achieving above half marks for the task.

There were however, some candidates who did not provide formulae when they were undertaking the calculations of the ratios in part **(a)** and they therefore ran the risk of losing marks if they produced errors in their workings. Centres are urged to encourage their candidates to preface every calculation with a formula in order that they will achieve the highest possible return.

The responses to part **(b)** were rather disappointing as many candidates did not refer directly to the financial information contained in the case study but instead produced general responses. If candidates had been prepared to back up their statements with numerical data as required they would have achieved a better result.

Task 4

Overall the responses to this task were disappointing with many candidates being unable to complete the necessary calculations of the A.R.R.% for the proposals. This was surprising as this topic has appeared on previous Papers and has been answers satisfactorily.

The answers to part **(b)** were, on the whole, better with most candidates capable of producing relevant and sensible reasons for their choice of proposals.

Task 5

Many candidates produced good answers to this task and consequently were awarded high marks. Weaker candidates did, however, mistakenly suggest that the sale of existing assets would add to the capital, whereas it should only be seen as a method of enhancing the cash flow of the enterprise.

Again, the weaker candidates tended to repeat their answers to part **(b)** when they were attempting part **(c)**, rather than providing a response that compared the various alternatives and justified their choice with a reasoned argument.

Task 6

The answers provided for this task were, on the whole, very satisfactory. Most candidates were able to identify relevant accounting concepts and provided sound explanations of how they would be applied to produce accounts. Unfortunately a sizeable minority of candidates did not explain how these concepts were being applied in the case study enterprise and, as a result, did not achieve full marks. Candidates should be encouraged to apply their knowledge to the case study, where appropriate, in their responses to the tasks.

Task 7

Overall this task was answered well by the vast majority of candidates. This is clearly a topic that is being covered in a comprehensive manner by most Centres and candidates are therefore being well rewarded for their efforts.

MARKETING

Module 5174

General comments

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General comments on the Question Paper

It was pleasing to see some Centres achieving a very good overall performance this session, and a general understanding of marketing at this level certainly exists. Unfortunately, some of this knowledge was applied in the wrong context this session, particularly through candidates failing to read the question carefully. Specific Syllabus content areas are covered in the section on tasks below.

The following issues have been raised in several previous Reports, but continue to cause problems for many candidates –

Reading the question carefully. In some cases, although the task required an explanation, many candidates simply listed the items requested. In addition, there were several instances of misreading of the requirements of the task. Centres are encouraged to give candidates practice in answering tasks from previous Papers to help them to understand the requirements of the tasks set.

Poor time management. This continues to be a common mistake. Candidates who fall into this category often spend too much time on a task, or part of a task, with which they are comfortable, leaving insufficient time to complete all remaining tasks. Candidates should note the allocation of marks to each task.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

This task was one of those where many candidates failed to read the question and so were unable to gain high marks.

(a) This part of the task asked for five ways in which a marketing orientation might help Ali improve business by defining his home market. Previous Papers have asked how a marketing orientation might be achieved, and unfortunately this was the task that many candidates addressed. Examiners were looking for factors relating to marketing orientation such as the fact that it would help Ali set customer focused objectives, it would focus all employees' activities on the customer, it would give a sense of purpose and direction as well as raising awareness of the organisation and genuinely focus on customer needs.

(b) It was pleasing to see so many candidates demonstrate a clear understanding of relationship marketing. However, very few were able to apply this to the task that was set, i.e. to maintain relationships with export customers while he focused attention on his home market. Those candidates who did apply their knowledge achieved high marks.

Task 2

This task was generally addressed well. It was pleasing to see a good understanding of appropriate research methods applied.

(a) This part of the task required explanations and recommendations of suitable research methods for a particular context - in this case the exploration of ideas for new products and the suitability of blankets. Many candidates were able to explain secondary and primary research and how both could be used in this context.

(b) This part of the task specifically asked about the use of continuous research to monitor the external environment of the company. Many candidates did very well and identified the need for monitoring political, economic, social, technical and competitive factors.

Task 3

Most candidates are now able to identify the roles within a Decision Making Unit. However, only a few were able to link these roles to relevant jobs within a retail firm. For example, a departmental manager might influence the type of rugs and blankets purchased through their knowledge of customer buying trends.

Task 4

This task was done very well by most candidates. It was particularly good to see candidates recognising how the product might be adapted for different segments - e.g. colourful blankets for children, warmer fabric used in colder geographical areas, decorated fabrics for the wealthy - and being able to link this back to demographic or geographic segmentation.

Task 5

This task assessed candidates' understanding of Ansoff's growth strategies, directly linked to the Case Study. This area has been assessed many times before, but in different ways.

(a) It was insufficient to draw a diagram showing what Ansoff's strategies are. This has been asked for on Past Papers, but this task required the identification of strategies that Ali had used. Some candidates tried to force Ali's activities into the four different growth strategies that Ansoff suggests. In fact part **(b)** of this task should have indicated that only three were appropriate. This was not a 'trick' question - Ali had in fact used one of the strategies in two different ways.

Market penetration	-	Further sales to overseas markets
Market development	-	Sales to home market Sales to large retailers
Product development	-	Blankets

(b) Candidates who addressed part **(a)** correctly had no difficulty identifying 'diversification' as the strategy that Ali had not tried.

Task 6

This task addressed one part of the marketing planning process - the control mechanisms - and looked for more depth of understanding to be demonstrated.

(a) This part of the task required candidates to recognise the importance of control measures in ensuring objectives are achieved, that progress is made, that activities are implemented effectively and that any necessary adjustments are made. There was generally a lack of understanding of the importance of reviewing and measuring in the planning process.

(b) This part of the task required candidates to give examples of qualitative and quantitative control methods, thus demonstrating an understanding of the need to measure issues such as customer attitudes as well as profitability and sales levels. Generally, those who were able to answer part **(a)** were also able to address part **(b)**.

Task 7

This task proved more difficult for candidates who failed to read it carefully. It asked for *advertising* media (TV, radio, press, cinema) but many candidates gave other elements of the promotional mix such as PR, personal selling, direct marketing or sales promotion.

(a)(i) The first audience given was a ‘trade’ audience, and therefore required candidates to recognise the relevance of trade press.

(ii) The second audience given was the consumer audience for Ali’s products. Ideally candidates would suggest lifestyle magazines using glossy colour ads that would highlight the designs of the products. However, marks were awarded for other suitable suggestions.

(b) Candidates that addressed this final part of the task generally did exceptionally well. It was very good to see a recognition demonstrated of the fact that cutting out the wholesaler might have many disadvantages.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Paper 5175

General comments

Centres are advised to ensure that the written work submitted by candidates is legible and well presented. There is no doubt that a clearly written script (preferable using black ink or ballpoint pen) helps the Examiner. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the Examiner is able to read the script and find the relevant answers, otherwise marks could be lost.

The first page should be clearly labelled with the Candidate's name, number and the Centre number. The module title, number and level should also be written down on the first page. Candidates should be encouraged to use answer paper which has margins on the right and left hand side of the page, or to draw margins onto their answer papers. Candidates can then use the left-hand margin to clearly identify the task number. Examiners use the right hand margin to put in marks gained and to total the overall marks. If there is not enough space to do this the Examiner will still put marks on the script, but the marks could easily be overlooked if they are surrounded by words. Candidates should leave enough space at the top of the first sheet of paper for the Examiner to write in the total marks awarded.

The quality of paper in some answer books or the type of ink in the pens used made some scripts very difficult to read. The words showed through on to the other side of the page and were then obliterated by the writing of other answers. Sometimes the ink was so faded that it was very difficult to decipher what had been written. In some other scripts the writing was so illegible as to be unreadable. Examiners can only give credit to answers that they are able to read. Candidates could lose marks if the Examiner is unable to read the script or if the candidate fails to state that part of the answer is on a different page. It is very difficult to mark scripts where the answers are not separated by lines or spaces or where the task and pages are not numbered. Marks may in fact be lost if the Examiner is unable to find the relevant responses in a poorly presented script. It is, therefore essential that Centres stress the importance of well-organised and legible work when preparing their candidates for assessment.

General comments on the Question Paper

The quality of answers was generally much higher this year than in previous years. Candidates displayed a greater knowledge of the subject areas of the Syllabus. Candidate's ability to understand the questions set has also improved which is a very pleasing trend. This shows that candidates are better prepared in terms of exam skills and techniques.

What still appears to be a problem is candidate's ability to move away from the pure repetition of knowledge and use their knowledge to analyse or evaluate situations or circumstances. This is a higher level skill but one that all candidates should possess. This is an area that future teaching should concentrate upon. This will extend the better candidates and produce better results overall.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) This part was reasonably well answered with candidates displaying a good knowledge of the operational purposes of HRM. Some difficulty was evident in the explanation of those purposes and many candidates forgot that two purposes were required.

(b)(i) This part of the question produced a number of good answers. There was evidence of clear and detailed understanding and good coaching.

(ii) This part of the question was poorly answered and those candidates that did have some understanding failed to provide good explanations.

(iii) This part of the question was again well answered with evidence of good teaching and clear and detailed understanding.

Question 2

(a) The majority of the candidates understood how customers influenced “Brenda Lee” but they failed to link this influence to HR. The understanding was good but the application was poor.

(b) Candidates approached this section in the same manner as **(a)**. Candidates clearly understood the influence of competition on Brenda lee but could not link this to HR.

(c) Candidates had a good knowledge of trade unions but less so of Government agencies. The majority of candidates were well informed concerning the influence that trade unions have on HR issues but few could provide a link to HR from Government agencies.

Question 3

This question was a good example of candidates not fully reading the question and providing what they thought was required rather than what the question asked for.

(a)(i)(ii) Both the strengths and weakness of “Brenda Lee” proved difficult for the majority of the candidates to find, despite the fact that the answers existed within the case study. The majority of candidates concentrated on the future plans and listed these as strengths and weaknesses.

(b) There appears to be a great deal of confusion over what is and is not data, consequently this part of the question was poorly answered. The question clearly required data linked to the business but many candidates ignored this and produced a list of “data”, some of which was very doubtful.

Question 4

This question provided a strange mixture of very good answers to part **(a)** and confused answers to part **(b)**. There is a clear issue about the differences between methods and systems of communication. This is as important as knowing the methods and systems.

(a) This part of the question produced some excellent answers, showing a detailed knowledge of appraisal and appraisal systems. There was considerable evidence of good teaching and clear understanding.

(b) This part of the question showed the classic lack of understanding regarding the difference between methods and systems of communication. This is a reoccurring problem that needs to be addressed.

Question 5

(a) The majority of candidates understood the concept of annualised hours but many had problems provided a detailed account.

(b) The understanding of “share options” provided more problems with many candidates confusing this with job sharing.

Question 6

This question provided a good example of candidate’s ability to recall knowledge but their inability to use this knowledge when confronted by different situations.

(a)(i)(ii) These parts of the question provided some excellent answers, clearly explained with some good examples.

(b)(i) Candidates found this part of the question difficult beyond the basic premise of ‘cost’. Candidates need to look at the problems of schemes such as pension as well as the ways in which they operate.

(c)(ii) Candidates rarely managed to find any problems with health schemes and sick days beyond the concept of unauthorised time off from work. Once again the critical analysis skills need to be developed by all of the candidates.

INTERPERSONAL BUSINESS SKILLS

Paper 5176

General comments

Tutors at Centres are advised to read the Syllabus for modules to identify and understand what is required of them. There is an advantage in matching the candidate to a suitable business or organisation, where this is appropriate, to carry out research or an investigation. Because of mismatching some candidates have struggled to provide evidence of module objectives. All objectives listed in the Syllabus under 'Criteria for Assessment' must be evidenced in the candidates' submitted assignment. Candidates should have access to the module Syllabus and have a good understanding of its content and requirements. Where the candidate is required to include a self assessment of performance this should be outlined as a separate item within the assignment. Personal opinions, any changes that could be made in future and any modifications to tasks if they were to be repeated again, should be included in this section.

'Reference sources used' has been a weakness in many assignments submitted by candidates. Some candidates have mentioned sources of advice, such as business professionals, in the text of the assignment. In order to meet the requirements of the assessment these people, and other sources of advice, should be mentioned in the section devoted to reference sources used. A bibliography of titles or materials used, Web sites accessed, and reference to and advice sought from outside bodies, are all appropriate. Some assignments have been bulky but this would not jeopardise the candidates' pass category, providing all the evidence is present and the work has a proper lay out and is well presented.

Candidates must always be encouraged to use business 'language' and to submit their work in a business like format. As a minimum the assignment should be compiled with a title page, contents/index, page numbering, introduction, main section with headings, results and findings, summary/conclusion, self assessment (if required) and appendices. The work should be collated and submitted in good order. A binder or quality folder can help in keeping the work safe and organised, but this is not a requirement for assessment.

The use of the 'Assignment Cover Sheet for Candidates' which is included in the Syllabuses, is recommended. These can be inserted at the front of candidates' work and on completion of the assignment can be annotated by referencing page numbers. The advantages are that there would be in place a checking system for the candidate, Tutor and Examiner, to ensure that all work has been completed and objectives evidenced in the text. For these reasons the majority of candidates using 'Assignment Cover Sheets' have been successful.

Tutors and their candidates should be commended on their continuing hard work to improve the standard of work submitted for assessment.

Comments on specific papers

Candidates in some countries had problems with the elements of praise, criticism and in particular assertiveness, when compiling their assignments. Where this relates to the culture of the country then this should be acknowledged and explained with comments and opinions written in to the text by the candidate or in the form of a footnote by the Tutor. At the Advanced Level the assignment should be of a high standard with a good lay out and presentation. The report and the work in general should be written in a business like way. The use of a mixture of font styles and sizes should be discouraged as it detracts from the overall presentation.

An emphasis should be placed on the subject, i.e. interpersonal business skills as opposed to the survey carried out and the subsequent results. There is no point in writing the self assessment section of the assignment in the third person as this relates solely to the candidate and his or her personal feelings about performance and changes, if the exercise were carried out again. It should be written in the first person, to show what the candidates has learned from the assignment. The purpose and function of the sample and reference groups is clearly stated in the Syllabus and guidelines should be followed to ensure that candidates are successful with this aspect.

A number of submitted assignments were of very high quality because a great deal of effort had been made by Tutors and candidates to get things right. Some would have been of great benefit to the organisations and companies studied and one would hope that copies of the assignments or reports would be handed over to the appropriate bodies to assist them in changing and developing new skills in the workplace.

BUSINESS START UP

Paper 5177

General comments

Tutors at Centres are advised to read the Syllabus for modules to identify and understand what is required of them. There is an advantage in matching the candidate to a suitable business or organisation, where this is appropriate, to carry out research or an investigation. Because of mismatching, some candidates have struggled to provide evidence of module objectives.

All objectives listed in the Syllabus under 'Criteria for Assessment' must be evidenced in the candidates' submitted assignment. Candidates should have access to the module Syllabus and have a good understanding of its content and requirements. Where the candidate is required to include a self assessment of performance this should be outlined as a separate item within the assignment. Personal opinions, any changes that could be made in future, and any modifications to tasks if they were to be repeated again, should be included in this section.

'Reference sources used' has been a weakness in many assignments submitted by candidates. A bibliography of titles or materials used, Web sites accessed, and reference to and advice sought from outside bodies, are all appropriate. Some assignments have been bulky but this would not jeopardise the candidates' pass category, providing all the evidence is present and the work has a proper lay out and is well presented.

Candidates must always be encouraged to use business 'language' and to submit their work in a business like format. As a minimum the assignment should be compiled with a title page, contents/index, page numbering, introduction, main section with headings, results and findings, summary/conclusion, self assessment (if required) and appendices. The work should be collated and submitted in good order. A binder or quality folder can help in keeping the work safe and organised, but this is not a requirement for assessment.

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Tutors and their candidates should be commended on their continuing hard work to improve the standard of work submitted for assessment.

Comments on specific papers

The action plan/check list was omitted by a number of candidates and the importance of business finance could have been explained more fully, both of these are an integral part of the module, as mentioned in the Syllabus. Candidates failed because all of the module objectives had not been evidenced in the assignments, these are listed in the syllabus. Some candidates had made a considerable effort to include all the elements as set out in the module and present their work in a business like way. They were successful.

CUSTOMER CARE

Paper 5178

General comments

Tutors at Centres are advised to read the Syllabus for modules to identify and understand what is required of them. There is an advantage in matching the candidate to a suitable business or organisation, where this is appropriate, to carry out research or an investigation. Because of mismatching some candidates have struggled to provide evidence of module objectives. All objectives listed in the Syllabus under 'Criteria for Assessment' must be evidenced in the candidates' submitted assignment. Candidates should have access to the module Syllabus and have a good understanding of its content and requirements. Where the candidate is required to include a self assessment of performance this should be outlined as a separate item within the assignment. Personal opinions, any changes that could be made in future, and any modifications to tasks if they were to be repeated again, should be included in this section.

'Reference sources used' has been a weakness in many assignments submitted by candidates. Some candidates have mentioned sources of advice, such as business professionals, in the text of the assignment. In order to meet the requirements of the assessment these people, and other sources of advice, should be mentioned in the section devoted to reference sources used. A bibliography of titles or materials used, Web sites accessed, and reference to and advice sought from outside bodies, are all appropriate. Some assignments have been bulky but this would not jeopardise the candidates' pass category, providing all the evidence is present and the work has a proper lay out and is well presented.

Candidates must always be encouraged to use business 'language' and to submit their work in a business like format. As a minimum the assignment should be compiled with a title page, contents/index, page numbering, introduction, main section with headings, results and findings, summary/conclusion, self assessment (if required) and appendices. The work should be collated and submitted in good order. A binder or quality folder can help in keeping the work safe and organised, but this is not a requirement for assessment.

The use of the 'Assignment Cover Sheet for Candidates', which is included in the syllabuses is recommended. These can be inserted at the front of candidates' work and on completion of the assignment can be annotated by referencing page numbers. The advantages are that there would be in place a checking system for the candidate, Tutor and Examiner, to ensure that all work has been completed and objectives evidenced in the text. For these reasons the majority of candidates using the 'Assignment Cover Sheet for Candidates' have been successful.

Tutors and their candidates should be commended on their continuing hard work to improve the standard of work submitted for assessment.

Comments on specific papers

The results of surveys carried out do not need to be described in a cumbersome or complex way and certainly should not be the major part of an assignment, a good balance within the candidates' assignment should be sought, with good advice from Tutors. Inter-departmental collusion between employees can be used as evidence of a positive stance to customer care in organisations, but some candidates missed this point.

Some reference sources were implied in the text of some assignments and this is acceptable. A candidate was given poor advice about selecting an organisation for research and study, it was too restrictive, which led to the candidate having problems making the comparison between theory and reality. Those using the Assignment Cover Sheets were more likely to be successful because of the double checking system that the form provides.

Shortcomings identified were assignment well below the 1800 words; comments were shallow and did not reflect Advanced Level standards; the analysis of the investigation was weak; the conclusions/recommendations section was weak and could have been extended; too focused on the company; and the main elements of customer care were omitted.

Some excellent work was submitted with comprehensive texts and a good command of 'business' English identified.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Paper 5201

There was an overall pass rate of 70% for this module, which can be compared with 59% in 2001 - 2002. The most frequent errors included:

- The failure to submit all the required printouts, particularly the two different copies of the document, as required by the Question Paper.
- The failure to understand the generic terms serif, and sans-serif. Many candidates tried to locate these as font styles rather than understanding that fonts such as Times New Roman contain short strokes or serifs on each letter, and that sans-serif fonts are without these.
- Errors in page layout, with the failure to set margins or column widths as specified.
- The failure to resize the imported graphic or to text wrap around this graphic.
- Widows, orphans, numbered lists or tables split across a page were not removed by inserting page breaks.
- Charts that were inserted but were unreadable, either because of the scaling of the chart or because of errors in the data series (usually because too much data had been selected as it was created).
- Errors inserting new text into a numbered list and renumbering as specified in the Question Paper.
- Errors in searching and sorting the database extract (particularly in maintaining the data integrity).