Cambridge International Diploma in Office Administration
Advanced Level

Scheme of Work

5242
Communication and Task Management
Core Module

UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations

Introduction

This core module is about giving administrators an insight into a range of management and communication tasks.

What is assessed in this module?

The ability to:

- identify and apply task objectives and requirements
- apply effective time management
- identify the purpose and use of agendas and procedures
- recognise the roles of team members
- deal with and make requests
- apply techniques for handling interruptions, criticism and aggression
- identify and apply business communication methods
- understand and apply the principles of written communication through a variety of business documents
- apply effective oral communication techniques
- apply face-to-face communication techniques

To start this module you will need:

- a range of teaching/learning materials
- a range of visual aids
- access to the Internet
- a range of textbooks and a supply of past CIE examination papers
- if possible, tape recorder/video playback equipment

Underpinning Knowledge

- a good standard of English
- a good standard of oral and written communication
- basic communication and management skills
- a desire to become a more effective communicator and manager
- a knowledge of the different aspects of office work which relate to specific jobs

General Principles and Procedures

Lessons in this module should incorporate a range of suitable and relevant teaching materials. One should draw upon students' work experience and employment where possible.

Simulation can be achieved in a variety of ways, such as practical assignments, in-tray exercises, training office assignments, role-playing and case studies.

The use of computers with Word Processing and Desk Top Publishing software would add authenticity to practical tasks.

Liaison with local business organisations and other external sources would be invaluable for observing meetings and discussions, studying forms of communication used in a variety of organisations and the successful application of time management skills.

Various forms of informal and formal assessment methods need to be incorporated into the teaching / learning process.

At the start of every lesson, it is a useful technique to write the learning objectives on the board. At the end of the lesson, assess whether these objectives have been learnt.

Scheme of Work

Competence Criteria	Classroom Ideas	Resources	Notes
Session One			
1.1	- introduction to the module - discuss what is involved in the module - short question and answer session to establish terminology likely to be used e.g. flow charts, action plans, time schedules, time management, deadlines - brainstorming (spontaneous discussion) of purposes and methods of communication - discussion – what makes for good communication and drawbacks to good communication - objectives of task to be undertaken - short written tasks	- flipchart or white board on which to collate responses to discussions - task sheets e.g. - ask students to set out what they consider to be the objectives of various tasks in relation to a business activity e.g. plan a social event related to a firm or college - present students with a badly written memo or letter, preferably with an ambiguous message, and ask them to identify errors and rewrite	- there are a number of concepts for students to understand. A question/answer session is vital to assess understanding. Students should be encouraged to make their own notes from the flipchart - the two tasks may be related to the students' working environment if in full or part-time employment - students should always be encouraged to word process letters memos etc.

Competence Criteria	Classroom Ideas	Resources	Notes
Session Two			

1.1	• feedback from last session – identification of objectives of a task
	• elicit need to establish terms of reference, to plan and monitor individual tasks to ensure achievement of goals by deadline set
	• discuss difference between general and specific objectives and the possible need to change objectives in the light of changing circumstances
	• discuss all the above in the light of tasks given to students for completion
	• written tasks
		• flipchart to record feedback
		• task sheets e.g.
		  - list actions to be taken when preparing a business luncheon to launch a new product
		  - use flow chart, action plan, and a list of general and specific objectives to organise a staff conference or two-day branch managers' conference
			• the length of tasks set will depend on time available. They can merely reflect need to set objectives and list actions to be taken or can involve the actual planning of a meeting or event

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Session Three			
1.1 1.2	• by way of feedback/discussion of tasks performed last session, elicit methods used to achieve goals, the need for establishing a time-scale and setting deadlines. Judge whether objectives have been met • introduce group work to plan and manage a task • discuss need to establish context of task, purpose of task and to decide who does what, levels of authority within the group and working relationships • discuss the need to communicate with or seek assistance from others inside and outside the organisation • students to form groups (preferably of three or four members) to undertake an assignment (see tasks) and report back to whole class	• suggested tasks: - launch of a new product or introducing existing product to a new market - opening a new branch or a shop - students should be reminded of the need to identify objectives, set deadlines, work schedules and list tasks; to apportion tasks and arrange for reporting progress - a leader should be elected to be responsible for reporting back to whole class	• the tutor could listen-in on discussions and make notes or give assistance where necessary

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Session Four			
1.1 1.2 1.3	• feedback on group tasks • discussion of more complex tasks with examples. Need to break down whole task into manageable smaller sections • discuss need to share information and collaborate with other interested parties • present whole class with task and discuss how to plan completion including resources needed, data collection, analysis and presentation of findings. Students can then (individually or as a group) list exactly how they would approach the task, any complexities to the task and how they would present their findings • students should also suggest objectives for undertaking the task and to whom and in what form the feedback should be presented	• flipchart • task – e.g. find out what people think about their present working conditions (in school, office, or factory • task to be completed to a given deadline	• students should be encouraged to note any positive comments or difficulties experienced in performing the task and how they managed their time to meet the deadline set

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Session Five			
1.3	- discuss need to apply effective time management - discuss the influence of working environment on time management – effective work space, access to effective use of communications, effective use of appointments and meetings - explain the use of critical path analysis - discuss how time can be wasted (lengthy telephone calls, unnecessary paper work or meetings etc.) - discuss the need to prioritise tasks and monitor use of time to ensure effective performance - distinguish between efficiency and inefficiency - discuss need to anticipate crises - tasks – problem solving	- task relating to meeting deadlines - an assignment which requires students to endeavour to meet a deadline yet where several problems are present which may prevent this - students should indicate how to improve the situation and make effective use of time - handout – example of critical path analysis - task - give students a list of tasks to be completed in the office today. Ask them to prioritise and arrange a work schedule. Some tasks may need to be delegated to others – why and to whom? - task - give students an example of a task which needs to be completed as a matter of urgency and then arrange for some interruption. Record how students deal with this problem	tasks can be presented as a case study or as a set of in-tray exercises. They can be completed individually or students can work in small groups. If the latter, the tutor can observe the actions and reactions of individuals within the group

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Session Six			
2.1 2.2 2.3	- discuss working as a team, establishing and agreeing ground rules, establishing behaviour, solving problems (tensions, disagreements) acceptance of constructive criticism - understand the different roles which constitute effective teams (leaders, thinkers, innovators, organisers etc) and how to use such members to ensure effective and efficient outcome of the team (team dynamics) - discuss need for leaders and types of leadership - discuss participating within teams – listening and reacting, appreciating and applying varying styles and manners of individuals - practical group discussions – tutor to observe, note and later comment on individual participants and group dynamics	- flipchart - list of topics for group discussion - handout or prepared OHT of responsibilities of team members e.g. the team leader	

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Session Seven			

2.1	• using the feedback from previous group discussions, elicit need for meetings to have an agenda
	• discuss need to keep on track within the meeting
	• discuss note-taking and minutes.
	• discuss implementation of decisions
	• discuss expectations, need for collaboration and co-ordination
	• short tasks
		• flipchart or white board
		• tasks - students could be asked to prepare an Agenda for a forthcoming meeting or a set of Minutes from notes taken at a recent meeting
		• Task e.g. An in-tray exercise could be set e.g. a memo asking the secretary to prepare notes on the meaning and methods of the following:
		  - need to discuss and consult with colleagues
		  - team effort
		  - work distribution
		  - personal (and team) development
		• these notes to form part of an induction programme for new office staff
			• students need to be reminded of the difference between formal and informal meetings with regard to their purposes and any specific documents – agenda, minutes, reports

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Session Eight			
2.3 2.4	• brainstorm kinds and sources of requests made by individuals particularly in the office/business environment. Open and closed questions • discuss difficulties in understanding requests – thinking time, clarification, accepting or negotiating deadlines, saying 'no' • discuss making requests – need to identify objectives, pick the right moment and use correct language • discuss individuals' different styles and manners • emphasise the need to listen, react constructively and avoid manipulation • discuss the use of the following in oral and written communication: body language, need to be polite but firm, need to keep to agenda • identify difference between constructive and unjustified criticism, unacceptable behaviour, aggression and the need to recognise the difference between assertiveness and aggression. Use prepared OHTs to give examples and elicit further discussion • task sheets and/or oral tasks	• prepared OHT showing examples of open and closed questions, various requests (indicating different objectives, language and tone) • prepare a list of oral requests you can make to individual class members using a variety of language, tone, style, manner and attempts at manipulation • ask students to comment on these requests and their possible reactions to them • prepared OHT of list of situations from which students can identify possible aggression, criticism, unacceptable behaviour etc. – get students to role play such situations • role play situations involving aggressive clients, critical customers • ensure students find the best methods of preventing and combating such instances	• role play exercises are invaluable in teaching these topics. They may take a little organising but students usually learn from them. Ensure students are always aware of their reactions to various requests and situations. It may be necessary to refer to cultural differences in body language

Competence Criteria	Classroom Ideas	Resources	Notes
Session Nine			
3.1	- brainstorm methods of communication used in business and with whom people need to communicate - discuss the needs of clients and customers and how the business responds to their needs - discuss what is meant by effective and efficient dissemination of information - discuss what types of information may be deemed confidential and why and the methods of ensuring confidentiality - relate back to methods of communication used in business and determine the appropriateness of each (e.g. written – letters, memos, emails, faxes) - revise need for clear, concise, accurate written communication and outline drawbacks to effective and efficient communication (written and oral) - short tasks	- prepared OHT identifying with whom businesses communicate e.g. individuals, groups, organisations. Why they communicate and the methods used - task sheets requiring composition and production of letters, memo, emails, faxes from given notes - prepared OHT or handout showing points which make for good written communication. Examples of flawed written communication	- tutor may need to revise notations relating to confidentiality on written communication, use of passwords and on-screen security when using computers - students need access to word processors to write letters etc. - students could be asked to rewrite examples of badly written messages

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Session Ten			
3.2 3.3	- discuss the need for clear and accurate spoken communication - discuss use of gestures, body language, facial expressions, eye-contact, tone etc in face-to-face communication - discuss the need to listen, understand and take in information - discuss importance of two-way communication and the accurate and speedy ways this can be achieved particularly over distances - role play exercises and tasks - by means of brainstorming, revise the principles of written communication, supporting this with a prepared OHT	- examples of role-play or tape recordings to identify different non-verbal and verbal communication - by means of a set of in-tray exercises, students could be asked to choose the most effective methods of communication in given circumstances. They may also be asked to outline the message involved - prepared OHT listing principles of written communication viz clear aim, logical structure, clear layout, appropriate style, conciseness (avoidance of distractions), tone and composition (avoidance of unclear language, jargon), short sentences, and paragraphs, avoidance of abbreviations	- the full range of written communication, including the structure of reports, has to be taught or revised - if necessary revise parties to communication – sender, receiver, medium message and their effectiveness

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Session Eleven			
3.3	• revise, through short question and answer session, the purpose of memos as a method of internal written communication and revise their layout. Use a prepared OHT to support session • this format can be used to revise emails, business letters and fax messages • remember students need in-depth discussions on the purpose, tone, style, language and interpretation of written messages	• prepared OHT showing examples of memo layout and use e.g. to confirm or amend oral agreements, provide or request information, put forward ideas and suggestions etc. • show an example of a well structured memo using acceptable display • prepared OHTs or handouts to identify important principles in other forms of communication. • give handouts showing good (and bad) examples of written communication, students should be given tasks in identifying shortcomings and composing more appropriate documents. They should also be given tasks in composing more complex messages	• the best method to ensure students are competent communicators is to give them practical exercises e.g. in composition or in group discussions • arrange face-to-face conversations for specific purposes and record or report back on observations made • it would be invaluable for students to be able to observe meetings or discussion groups from outside organisations or to be able to video-tape and play back examples of group discussions and meetings

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Session Twelve			
3.3 4.1	• establish, by question and answer session, the definition of a report. Elicit the aims, structure, style, composition and layout of reports • discuss the need to select information to be contained in a report, to plan the introduction, body and conclusion in logical order • discuss the layout and headings (topic and subheadings) including page numbering, appendices, possible use of diagrams and charts • discuss the difference between reports of meetings (standard business layout and written in third person); committee reports (formal style with conclusion and recommendations) and personal reports (no standard layout) • revise, through question and answer session students' ability to select appropriate communication style in given circumstances • consider: context – individual, conversations, interviews; meetings; status: superior, peer, junior; role: chair, seller, buyer, secretary; message: proposal, opinion; use of body language • short tasks	• handouts – examples of short well written reports for various purposes (meeting, committee, personal report) • prepared OHT of situations in which appropriate communication styles need to be selected • tasks of written and oral nature from given notes which ensure students appreciate context, status, role, message involved	• it is advisable to give out the examples (handouts) before discussion of differences takes place

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Competence Criteria	Classroom Ideas	Resources	Notes
Session Thirteen			
4.2	• revise attributes of good oral communication including improving listening skills, positive behaviour, sharing ideas, keeping to the point, questioning • revise distractions to good oral communication e.g. noise, personality disorders • arrange group discussions with tutor-elected leaders or specific members monitoring positive points and any drawbacks to effectiveness of communication • by way of revising and testing skills used in effective oral communication, a series of role-play activities would be useful	• prepared list of topics for discussion	• it is a good idea to try to involve students in some form of listening games

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Competence Criteria	Classroom Ideas	Resources	Notes
Session Fourteen			
4.3	• brainstorm use of telephone, particularly in business • discuss when it is used and why; how to answer an incoming call (firm's procedures); need to refrain from keeping caller waiting; practicalities of making calls (e.g. through an operator); planning in advance what is to be said; having relevant documents and writing implements to hand; message taking; clarification and repetition when necessary; confidentiality; telephone tones including international calls and the implications of international time zones	• telephone sets or tape recorders • assignments. It is essential to prepare several role-play exercises possibly with some students acting as clients to a business. The use of actual telephones would give authenticity to the activity	• this topic lends itself to role-playing with students playing the role of callers and telephonists • it is important for students to make observations and critical assessment of the activities performed
Session Fifteen			
• this session should be devoted to giving students the opportunity to bring forward points for discussion or revision, to seek individual help from the tutor and to work past examination papers			

Resources

Books

TITLE	AUTHOR(S)	PUBLISHER	DATE
Business Communication	David Nickson, Suzy Siddons	Heinemann	1996
Business Communication for Secretarial Certificates	Jon Sutherland, Diane Canwell	Heinemann	1997
Mastering Business Communication	L A Woolcott, W R Unwin	Palgrave	1983
Successful Time Management in a Week	Declan Treacy	Hodder and Stoughton	1998
Clear your Desk	Declan Treacy	Random House Business Books	1991
Time Management for Busy People	Roberta Roesch	McGraw Hill (USA)	1998
Perfect Time Management	Ted Johns	Arrow Books	1994

Websites

Websites such as:
www.amazon.com
www.heinemann.co.uk/vocational
are useful resources for information and the purchase of text books, together with search engines such as:

www.ask.com
www.google.com
www.yahoo.com