

# CONTENTS

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<b>OFFICE ADMINISTRATION FOUNDATION LEVEL .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Paper 5221 Text Processing .....	2
Paper 5222 Communication and Task Management .....	3
Paper 5223 Office Procedures .....	4
Paper 5225 Customer Care .....	6
Paper 5181 Information and Communications Technology .....	6

# OFFICE ADMINISTRATION FOUNDATION LEVEL

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Paper 5221  
Text Processing

## General comments

The candidates' overall performance was very varied. Some of the work submitted was of a high standard, with accurate work that was well presented. However, some candidates submitted scripts which were inaccurate and which showed little, if any, evidence of proofreading.

Some candidates did not succeed because they failed the Speed Test (**Task 1**). Candidates are required to key in all the text (to achieve the minimum speed of 25 wpm) within the error tolerance (six errors maximum are allowed) and within the time allowed (five minutes).

Some candidates were successful in the Speed Test but then incurred too many errors in **Tasks 2 – 5**.

Errors occurring in **Tasks 2, 3 and 4**:

- Errors of agreement were not corrected (such as "All building" not corrected to "All buildings" – 5221/A, **Task 3**).
- Apostrophe errors not corrected (such as "Joshuas' work" not corrected to "Joshua's work" – 5221/A, **Task 2**).
- Words omitted or keyed in inaccurately.

Candidates are reminded that, at this Foundation Level, only the words that are circled on the draft contain errors to be corrected.

Many candidates seemed to rely on spellcheckers and grammar checkers as their only means of proofreading. Frequently, errors such as "lost" ("last") and "sakes" ("asked"), which the spellchecker would not detect as incorrect, were identified during the marking.

## Comments on specific tasks

### **Task 1**

Although the majority of candidates completed the task within the error tolerance, there were some who did not complete the text within the five minutes allowed. There was a small number who did complete all the text, but who incurred more than the maximum six errors allowed.

Many of the candidates still do not seem to understand that they are allowed to proofread and correct errors *within the 5 minutes allowed*. Candidates should be advised that they are required to type the text once only and to spend any time remaining proofreading and correcting their work before printing.

### **Task 2**

Today's date is required, as is normal business practice. Omission of the date incurs three penalty errors.

The subject heading should be keyed in as displayed in the draft, for example Initial Capitals and Underlining or ALL CAPITALS. This assesses candidates' ability to use a variety of styles as presented in the draft (such as may be required by a company's house style).

Errors of agreement may be subject/verb or quantity/noun. These will include errors such as "we is" ("we are") and "20 car" ("20 cars").

### Task 3

Care should be taken to ensure that text is displayed consistently throughout. Some candidates produced text where the line-spacing between paragraphs was inconsistent and some paragraphs had been indented, while others had been blocked.

A page number on a single-page document is not required.

- Abbreviations not expanded (such as “necy” to “necessary” – 5221/A).
- A variety of typing errors, which ranged from omitted words to errors which the spellchecker would not have identified as incorrect, such as “form” instead of “from”.
- The words underlined in the draft were often not underlined by the candidates (such as “more buses” – 5221/A).

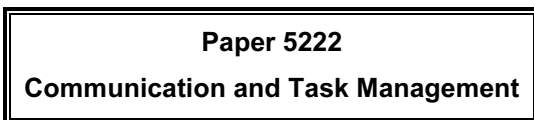
### Task 4

Letters must be produced on letter-headed paper – some candidates used plain A4 paper. The letter-heading may be prepared as a template for the use of word processor operators, or may be pre-printed. Candidates must *not* key in the letter-heading themselves. They are being assessed on their ability to produce letters in a realistic manner, as would be required in business.

Today’s date is required – full style is preferred, e.g. “1 January 2005”. The words “Our ref” were omitted. The enclosure was not indicated and abbreviations were not always expanded (such as “Rd” [“Road”], “snclly” [“sincerely”] – 5221/A).

### Task 5

This task was very accurately typed and excellently displayed by the majority of candidates. The methods of emphasis used were usually imaginative and very effective. Some candidates, however, did not use many of the forms of emphasis available to them.



### General comments

The submission of work was much better than that produced by candidates in previous years. Most candidates demonstrated sound underpinning knowledge and/or relevant work experience but there were still a few candidates who produced answers which indicated insufficient knowledge and no evidence of work experience.

It must still be stressed that some Centres continue to focus on selected aspects of the syllabus resulting in gaps in candidate knowledge and thus an inability to answer questions well.

There are no comments for questions, or parts of a question, which were generally found to have been answered satisfactorily. Most of Papers B and C have not been used by Centres and therefore there will be no comments on those papers in this report.

Most Centres have taken note of the comments made in the previous report concerning Foundation Level candidates and it was pleasing to see the improvement in both presentation and legibility of scripts. At all times candidates should be encouraged to keep in mind that the assessment is concerned with good business practices and this should be reflected in the presentation of their assessment submissions.

Centre administrators should ensure that candidates who sit both papers i.e. Communication and Task Management and Office Procedures in the same series have their documentation completed with the correct Paper Numbers – often these have been transposed e.g. 5242 instead of 5243 which could result in administration problems.

The comments in the previous reports concerning examination techniques have also been accepted by most Centres, although it is still a concern that some candidates are omitting to answer parts of questions or are not providing the requested number of points in their answers. This could be because of limited knowledge but it could also be as a result of not reading the question, poor proofreading skills or not ticking off a question as it has been answered.

It is important that candidates be given the opportunity to use past assessment papers and to sit mock examinations under timed conditions. This not only assists candidates in their examination preparation but provides them with feedback and to know their individual weaknesses in parts of the syllabus.

There has been evidence in a number of Centres that rote learning is used for selected parts of the syllabus and, whilst this is sometimes useful, candidates often find it difficult to apply that knowledge to the questions being asked.

Most candidates who completed this level were successful. However, candidates from several Centres had rote learned answers to questions and were unable to apply that learning to the questions asked. They therefore achieved minimum marks.

It also needs to be reiterated that some candidates who were entered for Standard and Advanced Level would have benefited from having completed Foundation Level initially. It is an introduction to the question types and wording used throughout the three levels as well as developing underpinning knowledge for topics which appear for all levels.

### **Comments on specific tasks**

#### **5222A**

##### **Task 1**

The question asked for ways you would use *body language* to show that you were friendly. Many answers referred to tone of voice.

##### **Task 2**

Candidates were asked to give examples of how you would *support* a colleague who has difficulty meeting deadlines. Often the question was misinterpreted and discussed interruptions and heavy workloads.

##### **Task 4**

Candidates were expected to list what they would expect to find in a business letter. This was generally well answered with candidates gaining full marks. However, weaker candidates referred to what was on letter headed paper such as telephone/fax numbers and email address.

<p><b>Paper 5223</b> <b>Office Procedures</b></p>
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### **General comments**

The general standard of work in 2004 has improved greatly with many candidates obtaining distinctions.

The same comments apply as with the Communication and Task Management Examinations in that there is evidence to indicate that only selected areas of the syllabus had been covered by some Centres. Candidates must have underpinning knowledge and/or work experience to ensure full coverage of the syllabus.

Owing to the greater numbers of candidates achieving success when completing Paper A it has not been necessary to use Papers B and C in some of the levels and therefore there will be no comments on those papers in this report. No comments have been made for questions, or parts of a question, which were generally found to have been answered satisfactorily.

The report in 2003 stated that although evidence of excellent work had been seen, some candidates would benefit from guidance on how to read examination questions and how to ensure that every part of the question has been attempted this still applies with candidates who took the examinations this year. Several candidates omitted whole or parts of questions or did not give the requested number of points.

Once again it is endorsed that candidates must also be given the opportunity to use past assessment papers and to complete mock examinations under timed conditions. This not only assists candidates in their examination preparation but provides them with feedback and to know their individual weaknesses in parts of the syllabus.

The candidates who completed this level were very successful and will hopefully progress to Standard and Advanced Levels. However, it has to be said that some Centres who entered candidates for Standard and even Advanced Levels would probably have benefited from having completed Foundation Level initially. It is an introduction to the question types and wording used throughout the levels.

### **Comments on specific tasks**

#### **5223A**

##### **Task 2**

Candidates were requested to give the functions of the Accounts Department and the Office Services Department. Most candidates were unable to give four functions of either of these Departments with the weaker one being the Office Services Department. Answers received, included arranging travel and maintenance of equipment.

#### **5223B**

##### **Task 1**

The question asked for the purpose of a team in an office and examples of the benefits of an effective team. Most candidates were able to state the purposes of teams but few were able to give more than one correct response to the benefits of having an effective team.

##### **Task 2**

The question asked for a list of items for the receiving and sorting of incoming mail. Many candidates incorrectly interpreted this question and received no marks. Their responses referred to packages, catalogues, express, registered and first class mail and no mention was made of equipment for receiving and sorting *incoming* mail.

##### **Task 3**

Part 1 asked for ways of reporting an accident. Answers given showed that candidates had misread the question and many said what they would do if they saw an accident.

Part 2 asked for reasons why accidents happen in the workplace and candidates were unable to give the required number of points.

##### **Task 4**

Most candidates omitted this task which asked for the ways of caring and keeping floppy disks secure. This part of the syllabus seems not to have been taught by some Centres.

**Paper 5225**  
**Customer Care**

**General comments**

Centres need to be alert to the administration elements of this scheme. The use of the assignment cover sheets is strongly recommended and has benefits for the candidate, Tutor and Examiner. Centres should only submit candidates' work if they feel it meets all of the requirements of the scheme and is complete. SAR sheets must be fully completed and signed by the Tutor before submitting work to be examined. Care must be taken in completing the list of names of candidates being put forward together with their assignments.

'Assignment Guidelines' and 'Criteria for Assessment' sections of the syllabus are very important and must be acknowledged and understood by Tutors.

Centres should try to be consistent with the layout and presentation of candidates' work. The assignments submitted should always be set out in a logical way, embracing conventional styles such as title, page numbering, contents page, headed sections, appendices, bibliography, etc.

The modules require that the candidate makes a self-evaluation of his/her performance in addressing a group, undertaking some research or simply commenting on the assignment. Tutor guidance is important with this issue (see the final item in the assignment cover sheets).

It is suggested that Tutors read all the comments below for each of the modules, as there are many points which could be applied to the majority of the on-demand assignments.

The layout of some candidates' work could have been improved, with better introductions and conclusions. Contents pages listing page numbers and titles would have helped the candidate, Tutor and Examiner. Two weaknesses were the candidates' self evaluation and failure to quote reference sources in the text. However, in some instances the latter was found to be implied in the candidates' work and this is acceptable. Centres are encouraged to use the correct version of the syllabus, as earlier publications did not include an 'assignment cover sheet'. Centres should always refer to the syllabus for the year of examination when delivering courses and helping candidates to prepare their assignments for submission. Those Centres using the cover sheets have been more successful in getting good grades.

Although this is Foundation Level, the assignments must be business like, with content reflecting the module guidelines. Sometimes the 'check list' was omitted and the SAR sheets were not fully completed; these are requirements of this module and in the case of the latter the work is returned to the Centre concerned.

**Paper 5181**  
**Information and Communications Technology**

The overall standard of entries for this module was excellent. The most common errors found this year included:

- The failure to produce formulae printouts from the spreadsheet. The most common package used was Excel and many candidates did not know how to use Tools, Options and tick the Formulae box prior to printing.
- 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.
- The loss of data integrity during sorts. Many candidates failed to highlight all the data prior to sorting by a specified field which meant that the data became irrelevant to the task in hand.