CONTENTS

Cambridge Career Awards in Business - Modules

BUSINESS ORGANISATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Paper 5161

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 standard and nature of this Paper are by now well established and whilst candidates seemed to cope with the October examination quite well they did not always relate the tasks to the text. Clearly candidates were expected to display knowledge of business issues but they were also required to apply that knowledge to the context of the case study. Some responses were made in general terms but marks were not denied because of that.

Higher marks went to those responses which indicated clear understanding and interpretation of the issues in the case study. Tutors and candidates are advised to consult Past Papers and Marking Schemes as part of the preparation process for the examinations.

Examination technique remains a concern. Failure to carry out instructions may cost valuable marks and for some candidates this may make the difference between pass and fail. It is not uncommon for a candidate, having been asked, for example, to offer two advantages to write three or four items or even suggest disadvantages. The Examiner is justified in marking that part of the response which is precisely in accordance with the task. Tutors and candidates should bear that in mind.

Tutors are asked to encourage their candidates to:

- read the Examination Paper's instructions very carefully
- ensure they fully understand what the Examiner wants them to do
- lay out their responses to tasks cleanly and clearly
- see that some tasks are worth more marks than others and respond accordingly
- manage the examination time sensibly and effectively.

The fourth point is worth some reiteration since a number of candidates did not acknowledge the difference between the treatment of a 5-mark task and a 10-mark one. Candidates should be careful not to over-answer the smaller tasks, but they should recognise that the larger tasks need more detail.

Candidates are given fifteen minutes reading time in order to allow them to become acquainted with the case study and the nature of the tasks. Candidates should use the time effectively and ensure that they understand what is required of them.

It is recognised that most of the candidates will be tackling the Paper in a second language. The quality of English is not taken into account when assessing the Paper. Incorrect spelling and/or grammar are ignored in favour of the facts and discussions in the responses.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

(a)-(e) This task was designed to be a 'starter' activity which ought to give candidates the opportunity to earn a significant contribution towards the pass mark. There are five components, each worth up to and including 3 marks. Securing 2 marks for each response should present little difficulty for a candidate with a good knowledge of business terms.

Few candidates scored very well with this task. All the terms were used in the text and line referenced in the Examination Paper so that candidates could easily read them in the appropriate context. Particular difficulties were encountered with **(b)** *Exclusive Region* (line 11 in the text) and **(e)** *Business Climate* (line 46). To earn full 3 marks for a response, candidates needed to offer perhaps two or three well-constructed sentences of explanation. To reinforce this point, **(d)** asked for a definition of PEST factors and many candidates merely indicated that PEST stood for Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors. That was correct but the response earned only 1 mark when what was required was some evidence of application i.e. the factors influence business organisations in that they may be threats or opportunities, that they are applied from outside e.g. Government tax policy.

Task 2

(a) This was not a hard task. It required a definition and then a brief judgement. Many candidates clearly did not know what a micro business was. It was mostly considered to be a small business, which was not incorrect, but the definition needed to refer to the point that micros employ less than ten people. The candidates were then asked to deduce whether or not the Agency was a micro-business (based on the data in the text). It employed six staff (excluding partners who are not employees) plus an unspecified number of teachers. It was required of them to argue briefly whether or not it was a micro (<10) or a small (>10) business. The Agency could have been either; there was no 'right' answer. Marks were awarded for the treatment of the task.

(b) 'Franchise' offered safer ground for most although the task could have been tackled a lot better. The candidates were asked to identify two advantages of being a franchise. The two points were needed for 5 marks but one well explained advantage could earn 3 marks. The points could have been general but firmer marks were assured if the response was related to the text e.g. the Agency was granted an exclusive region with no threat from other Excelsior competition.

(c) This task revealed some weakness in the understanding of partnership. The whole point of the situation was that despite the differences in investment, each partner received an equal share of the profits as provided for by the Partnership Act 1890. The way to satisfy the majority investor was to have a Deed of Partnership, or some form of agreement, which could provide for the distribution of profits (and losses) in direct proportion to investment. The key to this task was the Deed or agreement and very few candidates appreciated this point.

Task 3

(a) This task was quite well done and indicated a clear understanding how the different functions of a business linked together. There was no specific way of responding to the task. Some chose to identify each function with an explanation whilst others described the linkage in terms of the knock-on effect. What was important was that linkage i.e. how each function complemented another, was ably demonstrated. Candidates were generally confident with this task.

(b) There seemed to be little understanding or awareness of working in a matrix and the operation of a project team. The idea of specialists was recognised but few explained their need to work together to realise the interdependence of their functions.

(c) Candidates were asked to explain the term '*accountability*'. This was a disappointing task since many responses were in the context of accounts and balance sheets. Accountability is an important concept in business. The object of the task was to get candidates to acknowledge the extent to which an individual, team, or even a department may be held responsible for the success or failure of a policy, action, or initiative.

Task 4

(a) This has become a fairly standard task and the emphasis was on the expectations that the employers had of their staff. Latitude was given in the assessment since a number of candidates confused employers with employees. Candidates really needed to rehearse the points in the Syllabus and put them in the context of the case study e.g. to have the ability to work with others (most important on overseas contracts), to have appropriate qualifications and teaching experience.

(b) This was not tackled as well as it might have been simply because there was a lack of understanding of what teachers (or anyone) on an overseas assignment might want e.g. a safe working environment, a secure contract, appropriate accommodation, and so on. Only two arrangements or conditions were called for and both had to be offered for 5 marks otherwise one well explained point could earn 3 marks.

(c) Detailed knowledge was not required for this task but there needed to be some indication that the difference between a *fixed term contract* and being *freelance* was understood. There was the view, often given, that a freelance was not tied down to any specific contract which is certainly not the case. The point here is that a freelance is self-employed and sells services (teaching) to clients (schools) for a fee rather than a salary. There is no security of employment, and work and income tend to be irregular. Once a freelance has accepted an assignment then that person is just as contractually bound as the teacher on a fixed term contract. The teacher on a fixed term contract can look forward to secure employment for the duration of the contract and will be regarded as an employee (with all the benefits that that implies).

Task 5

(a) The structure of this task ought to be familiar by now as each Paper asks candidates to describe how two external factors might influence the organisation featured in the text. On this occasion it was *competition* and *employment policy* but, although they were understood as terms, they were not well applied to the case study. Only a few candidates were able to fully exploit their opportunity here. Complex detail was neither asked for nor expected but candidates needed to demonstrate a general understanding of how these two factors might influence and affect the Agency.

Competition was not considered a serious threat as the market was large and still growing. The situation would change if more agencies entered the market or if there were fewer teaching places to fill. If competition became a serious factor then the Agency might only survive by becoming price competitive.

Employment policy was mostly treated as a factor internal to the organisation. Little account was taken of the possibility that countries in the exclusive region might attempt to regulate even the temporary 'export' of teachers or that host nations might tighten up on the placement activity by making it difficult for schools to employ non-nationals, even temporarily.

(b) The issue of location of business was mostly treated with little reference to the case study. The task required candidates to indicate their appreciation and awareness of location issues and detailed description or argument was not really required. The point that candidates needed to emphasise was that access to raw materials, water, etc. was not relevant as the Agency was not an industry. The Agency recruited in its region by using consultants who made the local contacts. The actual location of the business was immaterial; the only major factor was the access to reliable communications (e.g. Gaborone has an airport).

Task 6

(a) The candidates were asked to supply three factors or issues which affected the nature of the Agency's market. Only a list was required but full marks were available for overt application to the Agency. Examples of factors include: government controls (e.g. employment laws), the product (i.e. supply of trained and experienced teachers), price (i.e. cost of supplying the teachers), or the extent of the competition (other agencies).

(b) Candidates were asked how the Agency could ensure client satisfaction. The important issue here, from the Examiner's perspective, was the nature of the Agency's business. For many candidates it was a case of rehearsing such elements as refunds, credit facilities and after-sales service as if the Agency were in retailing or manufacturing. The Agency had to respond to its clients' needs in a specialist market. The main clue was provided by the task itself i.e. the clients '*expect experienced and qualified teachers*'. This expectation imposed a duty on the Agency to ensure that all teachers were thoroughly interviewed and assessed, fully briefed about the country they were going to, had genuine qualifications, and were carefully matched with the schools they were going to. Equally the Agency had the responsibility to act swiftly in any case where a teacher failed to give satisfaction by, for example, replacing the teacher, offering compensation, and/or giving a discount on fees.

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Paper 5162

General comments

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General comments on the Question Paper

Candidate performance

It was very disappointing to see some very poor Papers for this examination. Clearly, Tutors and candidates need to ensure that they are able to access the Examiner's Reports and marking scheme to help improve answers.

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

Misinterpretation of the task requirements. This was very evident in a number of tasks. **Task 2 (b)** asked candidates to write a business report. In general, this was not completed correctly and candidates did not seem to know the difference between a letter and a report. Many answers were written as letters rather than reports. This will be discussed more fully further in the Report.

Reluctance to comply with the task requirements. A number of candidates chose to ignore exactly what was required in certain tasks and generally wrote about the key subject of the task. This was evident in **Task 5 (a)** where candidates were required to draw a bar chart using data for 2002 only. Most candidates did not do this but used data for 2002 and 2001.

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, there was a slight improvement in the presentation of work but still there were many candidates who demonstrated very poor writing skills and their work was very difficult to read.

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 be taught to proportion their time for each question. There will always be five compulsory questions on this Paper and thus candidates should be able to allocate their time accordingly.

Syllabus problems

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

Layout of a report

Methods of evaluating the effectiveness of communications

Presentations

Checklist for planning interviews.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

(a) This task required candidates to explain three issues which needed to be considered when deciding the best methods of communication to internal employees. This was worth six marks (two marks per expanded point) and so candidates should have apportioned their time accordingly. Often candidates tend to spend too long on **Task 1** to the detriment of the rest of the Paper.

The answers should have included: need to convey clear message within the organisation; the business needs to receive and process information effectively; necessary for a business to operate successfully at all levels; need to consider the individuals within the organisation and consider appropriate methods, i.e. Directors, shop floor, admin staff etc; need to consider the immediacy of the communication; need to consider the importance of the communication i.e. disciplinary interview, notice about canteen opening times; need to consider the level of feedback required i.e. one-way or two-way communications; need to consider methods of recording the communication i.e. copies to etc; need to consider timings and costs involved and the need to consider use of electronic methods.

In general, candidates seemed to answer this reasonably well although some just wrote about general issues to do with communications or put in a diagram about the communication process.

(b) This part of the task required the candidate to explain two methods of one-way and two methods of two-way communications for new staff. This was worth eight marks (two marks per method). The answer should have included the identification of one-way communications such as letter, memo or report and an explanation of each. For two-way communication, telephone, meetings, quality circles, interviews and briefings could have been offered with an explanation of each.

It was surprising (even at this level) to find that some candidates did not seem to know the difference between one and two-way communication. Some candidates only gave a one word answer and no explanation which clearly meant that they did not receive full marks.

(c) This part of the task required candidates to identify and explain three different methods of evaluating the effectiveness of communications. This was worth six marks and so, there were two marks available for each method which had been explained.

Answers should have included: availability – (can staff access the information?); cost-effectiveness – (is it cost effective?); message content – (is the message understood and decoded correctly by the receiver or member of staff?); appropriateness – (is the method appropriate for the situation?).

This seemed to be a difficult task as most candidates could not really answer this well. Many referred to general issues rather than specific evaluation methods.

Task 2

(a) This part of the task required candidates to write a promotional letter to customers. Again, this is a very predicable task on the Examination Paper now, and candidates should ensure that they practice letter writing. This was worth eight easy marks. The letter should have been laid out in a formal way and the contents should have been persuasive.

The letter should have conformed to the following format:

Logo or letter heading of the company

Date

Reference number

Appropriate salutation – Dear Mr/Mrs

Letter Heading – Have you Visited Our Pet Factory?

The body/content of letter

Discussion of key reasons for visiting the PF

Include website details

Appropriate closure

Signature and position.

The content and tone of the letter should have been persuasive. It should have cited the fun elements and reasons for visiting the Pet Factory and the website. The letter could also have included some inducement or response mechanism.

In general, many candidates did complete this reasonably well, however, some were very brief and did were not persuasive at all.

(b) This part of the task required candidates to write a report on the current state of the company for circulation to internal staff. This was worth twelve marks and so a good amount of time should have been spent on this part of the task.

The report should have been set out as a normal report (see below for a short example).

Many candidates did not complete this part well. There seemed to be confusion between the layout of a report and a letter! Clearly there is a major difference here and candidates must ensure that they are able to write reports effectively. Consequently, many candidates lost a lot of marks here.

Report on Internal Staff on Motivation (heading)

To: All internal Staff

From: Hanley's Board of Directors

Date: 14^{th} October 2003

Terms of Reference

The aim of this report is to communicate the current state of the company and improve moral etc…..

Refubisment of Store (body of the report)

The store has been recently refurbishment to allow free flowing movement of customers to our new……. (could have included recruitment of new members of sales staff, increasing turnover and profit figures year on year etc).

Conclusion

This report has identified the key improvements which have been undertaken in the Hanleys organisation since 2002. (This section needs to be up-beat to raise morale) etc.

Recommendations

The Board of Directors at Hanleys value their staff and would welcome staff feedback on all the new ventures……., etc.

Task 3

(a) This task required candidates to identify, with reasons, two methods of communication which Collins could have used to discuss negative attitudes of sales floor staff. This was only worth four marks, however, it did require reasons to be offered.

The answer should have included:

One to one interview – to identify individual perceptions, avoid embarrassment, look for personal explanations

Regular meetings with the staff – to investigate and discuss as a group, brain storming, etc

One off presentation to staff with group feedback – to air the problem and seek thoughts before deciding next course of action

Set a group project to investigate – to set a time-scale for the group to identify and come up with proposals.

Generally, methods were identified, but a number of candidates forgot to justify or give reasons for the methods suggested and thus lost marks.

(b) This section of the task required candidates to write a checklist for running meetings. This was worth ten marks and so candidates should have realised that this was quite a large task and should have spent the appropriate time on this.

The answers could have included:

The nature of the meeting – i.e. is it solely to give or to receive information or both? Is it important to facilitate discussion?

Who should be invited to the meeting and what is to be each individual's role or relative contribution?

A notice of the meeting must be issued

An agenda must be prepared

An approximate time-scale for the duration of the meeting should be decided – a guillotine approach, where items are time-limited, may need to be taken for agenda items

Minutes should be taken, produced and circulated after the meeting has taken place

Action points must be detailed in the minutes which must be refereed to in the following meeting

A chair for the meeting must be appointed and his/her agenda drawn up – is the chair to rotate so that each person has the opportunity to chair a meeting?

A suitable room/location must be prepared and ready to receive the participants

Preparation of appropriate information must be ready for each meeting

The date of the next meeting should be decided at the end of each meeting

The timing of the meeting in terms of the time of day should be decided.

Unfortunately, some answers were very brief and did not really cover many of this issues required, thus indicating a lack of knowledge in this area.

(c) This part of the task required the candidate to identify three verbal and three non-verbal issues which Collins would have considered when planning a presentation. This was worth six marks, with one mark per point being awarded. This was quite difficult and many candidates seemed to struggle here, muddling up the difference between verbal and non-verbal. Some candidates only wrote in general about presentations and so did not answer the question fully or gain all of the marks available.

Answers should have included an explanation of the following:

Verbal communication:

Decide on the aim of the message

Select and deliver the important facts and figures

Identify and stress the key points of the message

Choose an appropriate verbal style – sincerity, warmth, assertiveness, diplomacy

Choose an appropriate articulation – tone, enunciation, emphasis, volume, projection

Monitor feedback constantly – adjust delivery accordingly

End on a positive note.

Non-verbal communication

Need to decide on body stance and gestures – ease, physical presence, enthusiasm

Need to ensure eye contact

Need to be prepared to listen to feedback and show this

Need to check facial expression

Need to choose most effective methods of presenting data – charts etc.

Task 4

(a) This part of the task required candidates to write a checklist for market research interviews with customers. This was worth ten marks and thus quite an important task.

The answers should have included the following guidelines for planning interviews:

Consider the aims and purpose of the interview

Need to consider type of questions – open, probing, scenario base, etc

Need to write an interview protocol

The discussion should largely go backwards and forwards from the interviewer to the interviewee so that the interviewer maintains the position of controlling the proceedings

Need to consider the non-verbal communication i.e. body language

Need to ensure bias is minimised in the interview

Need to consider the length of the interview

The interviewer will also need to set the general tone of the interview

Need to choose an appropriate location

Need to listen carefully for information expressed by the interviewee. Need to consider how this is to be recorded

Need to consider an incentive to ensure response

Need to make notes on critical issues during the course of the interview

After the interview, need to spend a few minutes making additional notes that may be useful for reference later, whilst the interview is fresh in the mind.

In general this was not answered very well. Some candidates wrote questions for the interviews rather than a checklist. It should be remembered that a range of business interviews are on the Syllabus and thus tasks may be set around any of these different types of interviews.

(b) This part of the task required the candidate to identify and explain two problems which could occur if the customer interviews were not conducted well. This was worth four marks and so two explained problems were required for two marks each.

The answers should have included:

Customer may become disillusioned

Customer may become bored

Customer may take the opportunity to complain

Customer may decide not to come back to the store

Customer may feel that the interview is too intrusive and personal.

There were some good answers for this part of the task, but many candidates wrote generally about interviewing problems rather than considering the context of the question.

(c) This part required the candidate to list three other types of business interviews which could be undertaken with internal staff. This was worth six marks so each type identified and explained was worth two marks each.

The answer should have included: performance appraisal reviews; medical interviews; counselling interviews; grievance interview; disciplinary interview; promotional interviews.

Many candidates missed this part of the task out, which seemed to indicate a lack of knowledge.

Task 5

(a) This part of the task is quite predicable now and required candidates to draw a bar chart for 2002 from the data presented in the case study. This was worth an easy ten marks. Most candidates were able to do this, but some of the presentation and accuracy was very poor. This was marked according to: the correct aid being used; the correct values being plotted on axis, with '0' as the common factor; correct shaded areas to illustrate key and clarity of chart and correct labelling.

Candidates should always use the graph paper which is provided to ensure the accuracy of the data which they present as this is marked.

(b) This part of the task required the candidates to list two issues which should be considered when producing data as a visual aid. This was worth only four marks.

The answers should have included: analysis of the audience to whom this information will be presented and reflect their needs in terms of the amount and level of data used; keeping the format simple, uncrowded and easy to handle; labelling the information clearly; providing a key for headings etc; offering attention to labels and using shading where appropriate.

Candidates did not appear to answer this part well, this may have been due to the lack of time which most seemed to suffer.

(c) This task required candidates to explain pie charts and line graphs. This was worth six marks, i.e. three marks each.

The answers should have included the following:

(i) *Explanation of pie chart*: Circular diagrams that are particularly useful for showing the composition of all data, with the segments demonstrating the relative values of the data. Must be accurate. Not all information is best presented in this way.

(ii) *Explanation of line graphs*: these are a series of points joined to gather to form a straight or curved line and are usually used to reflect a trend over a period of time, or the interaction of two variables. Similar to column or bar charts, but with the lines instead of columns to represent the value of the variables.

Once again, in general, this was not answered particularly well, even though this is a popular task on the Examination Paper and should have been predictable. Many candidates seemed to have run out of time and thus did not get the chance to answer appropriately.

BUSINESS FINANCE

Paper 5163

General comments

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General comments on the Question Paper

Overall the performance of the candidates who sat the October 2003 Examination was extremely pleasing, with the majority of the candidates achieving a pass mark.

It would appear that the candidates were both better prepared for the examination in terms of subject knowledge and that they had managed their time more effectively when answering the tasks. Centres are to be congratulated for their role in both events and are urged to continue to support their candidates in this manner.

Centres are, however, reminded of the need for precision when defining terms or providing explanations as this will result in the candidates achieving the highest marks for their answers. In addition candidates are to be reminded that when they are undertaking calculations it is always advisable to provide a formula to show *how* they are attempting to solve the task.

If Centres were to stress the above points it could well lead to more candidates achieving a distinction grade rather than a pass.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

Overall the responses given by the candidates to this task were satisfactory.

This would appear to indicate that Centres are providing instruction across the whole breadth of the Syllabus and for this Centres are to be commended.

However, with a little more precision in defining terms the candidates could easily achieve the highest marks available and thereby move closer to achieving a distinction for their efforts.

Task 2

Again the responses provided by the candidates to this task were satisfactory, with many candidates capable of providing at least three relevant sources of capital and demonstrating that they understood the consequences of employing these sources.

There was however, some confusion regarding the sale of existing assets as a possible source of additional capital, as opposed to a possible improvement to the cash flow of the enterprise. Centres are requested to address this issue as a matter of some urgency.

Task 3

The answers to this task were either very good or rather poor. It would appear that in some Centres this topic is not being given sufficient attention and this is seriously disadvantaging the candidates. Given the importance of maintaining adequate levels of cash during the trading year Centres are recommended to give this topic priority during their teaching schedules.

Task 4

This task produced many very good responses from the candidates and in a sizeable minority of cases they were awarded full marks for their answers. Candidates appeared to be able to provide precise explanations to both parts **(a)** and **(b)** and clearly were able to distinguish between records and books of account. The level of precision demonstrated in this task is what is sought across the whole Paper and Centres are urged to recommend to candidates the need to be precise and concise when answering the tasks.

Task 5

Overall the candidates' responses to this task were very satisfactory. Candidates were clearly familiar with the various accounting concepts and were capable of explaining what was meant by each of their chosen concepts. It was disappointing however that few candidates were able to fully explain *how* the concepts would contribute towards the accuracy of the accounts. Centres are recommended to address this issue to assist future candidates.

Task 6

The answers to this were rather disappointing. Candidates appeared to have some background knowledge regarding the difference between gross and net profit but in very few cases were they capable of employing correct formulae to complete the calculations. Again this is a topic that Centres should address with some urgency.

Task 7

This task was generally answered well by the majority of the candidates. Both parts of the task attracted good responses and these are clearly topics that are being covered in a thorough way by the majority of the Centres.

MARKETING

Paper 5164

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

It was pleasing to see some very good overall performance this session, and a general understanding of marketing at this level was demonstrated. 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 some candidates. It is good to see progress being made. However, Centres should still reinforce these points with candidates.

Reading the question carefully. In some cases, although the task required an explanation, many candidates simply listed the items requested. 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 set to focus candidates on the Case Study and required them to identify examples from the scenario.

(a) This first part of the task asked candidates to identify five items from the Case that demonstrated marketing orientation. Many candidates did this well and showed a good grasp of the subject.

(b) This section allowed candidates to be creative and put forward relevant ideas as to ways in which customer loyalty might be developed. Most candidates put forward suitable suggestions, although some were not able to explain how they might maintain customer loyalty.

Task 2

This task explored the use of marketing research, and was generally well addressed.

(a) Most candidates were able to explain both secondary and primary research, and many were able to also explain the benefits that each offers.

(b) Again, most candidates were able to put forward the required number of sources, although some were simply listed and not explained in any depth. Some candidates were not able to effectively discriminate between secondary sources of data that would reveal relevant competitor information and those that would not.

Task 3

It is very pleasing to report a demonstrable improvement in candidates' understanding of the topic of segmentation. Responses to this task were generally very good and well-presented.

(a) Candidates were able to define the term segmentation, and explain one reason why it might be used.

(b) Again, most candidates were able to explain what demographic segmentation involves, and those who suggested appropriate ways in which the company might use demographics were awarded high marks. For example, they might design advertising to attract working couples with little time, but a high income, or alternatively they might design ads to attract boys under twelve linked to activities that would appeal to that group.

Task 4

This task required candidates to explore various aspects of the marketing planning process, and some candidates found this difficult.

(a) This task was quite searching and required candidates to give the reasons why marketing plans are used. Some candidates wrote about the format of a plan and what happened at each stage, rather than the reasons why they are produced.

(b) This part of the task asked why marketing objectives are used within plans and looked for their specific role to be explained - i.e. they identify what is to be achieved, focus the marketing team's attention and give a statement against which progress can be measured.

(c) Finally, candidates were asked to write two objectives for a particular target market of the company. Many achieved the marks available for attempting to write relevant objectives, and some candidates were clearly able to write SMART objectives and therefore attracted full marks for this section.

Task 5

This task explored aspects of the marketing mix.

(a) The first part of the task required candidates to explain the importance of achieving a balance across the elements of the mix. Many candidates found it difficult to explain this concept, but those that did gave examples such as the company advertising widely and then not having the product available in supermarkets, or advertising a 'quality' product and setting the price so low that it was perceived as low quality.

(b) This task was set to encourage candidates to think creatively about the type of promotional activity that was appropriate for the company. Those who attempted this part of the task generally performed well and suggested highly appropriate combinations of promotional activity.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Paper 5165

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 general standard was better than last year with fewer candidates failing to answer all of the questions set. Whilst the general standard was much improved it was also evident that for some candidates language problems created a misunderstanding of what was required as an answer. The consequence of this was that a number of candidates produced responses that whilst they were correct, did not answer the question set. Interpretation of the requirements of a question is an important skill and it may be a good idea for Centres to devote time to this part of the examination process.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates found it difficult to differentiate between "creating" and "maintaining" relationships, consequently both parts of the question tended to be the same. Candidates were far happier with creating rather than maintaining and possibly more emphasis needs to be placed upon the whole process rather than the initial part.

Question 2

Part **(a)** was generally answered well but part **(b)** was consistently answered poorly. Candidates only offered a stereotypical view of women as decorative, or as mothers and did not present an answer based upon HR principles.

Question 3

Candidates produced good answers to part **(a)** generally discussing Trade Unions and Government Agencies as the two main external bodies. Some candidates were unable to distinguish between internal and external. In contrast part **(b)** was poorly answered with few candidates able to discuss the influence these bodies had on HR policies. General comments on what these bodies do were offered as an answer. This is an area on which Centres might which to concentrate a little more.

Question 4

Generally this question was poorly answered. Very few candidates understood the legal aspects of HR beyond Equal Opportunities issues. Some work is required to ensure that candidates understand the range of legal issues linked to HR.

Question 5

Candidates answered all four parts of this question well. The difference between resignation, retirement, redundancy and dismissal was fully understood and well explained. This appears to be an area that has been well taught.

Question 6

Candidates *understood* each of the three parts of this question but in each case seemed unable to relate these to the actual question set. The answers mainly comprised of descriptions of the three elements, job description, person specification and application form. Whilst the candidates have a full and detailed knowledge of these aspects of HR, extra work on their purpose and role would be beneficial.

Question 7

This question was poorly answered with methods of communication described, and in many cases only one example used. Candidates need to be taught the differences between methods and systems of communication and the links to the resolution of staff problems and HR issues in general.

Question 8

Candidates found this question very difficult and whilst they could discuss at great length the topic of motivation and the some of the theories, few actually answered the question set. The term “nature of work” caused particular difficulties for the majority of candidates. The link between the work people do and how that might motivate them is important and more instruction in this area would greatly help candidates.

INTERPERSONAL BUSINESS SKILLS

Paper 5166

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 should be encouraged to quote reference sources either as a list at the end of their assignments or as an integral part of their work. Tutors are reminded that it is essential to check that the assignment guidelines, as mentioned in the Syllabus, are incorporated in the candidates’ work. This would ensure that mention is made of the reference and sample groups, that a presentation is carried out, that a candidate makes a self assessment and reports it and the assignment length is within the wordage recommended. The use of the Assignment Cover Sheet for Candidates is recommended and should be fully completed with page numbering added. To write onto the sheets ‘see appendix’ or to leave the boxes empty is not sufficient. The actual size of both the sample group and the reference group is important and is specifically mentioned in the Syllabus; some Centres did not follow this advice.

BUSINESS START UP

Papers 5167

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

In general, candidates have submitted assignments that have been both well laid out and presented to the Examiner. In some instances too much emphasis had been placed by candidates on the business proposal to the detriment of the business plan. There were some weaknesses in assignments whereby candidates had failed to provide sufficient evidence of the module objectives. It is very important that evidence be available for all module objectives listed in the Syllabus. Some of the comments made by candidates were not business like and this reflected on the overall quality of the assignment.

CUSTOMER CARE

Paper 5168

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

Again, reference sources were missed or could have been more detailed. In one instance, customer care as it operates in different organisations, has not been discussed by the candidate, yet it was appropriate to do so. It is also part of the requirements for the module. Shortcomings identified were some objectives missing; no survey conducted and subsequently no analysis made; no index or contents page to the assignment or the index not matching the page numbering. One Centre failed to attach the Student Assessment Record Sheets to candidates' work; this is essential to demonstrate that the candidate has covered the listed objectives as part of a course and has an understanding of these elements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Paper 5191

The most common errors included:

- Errors in sorting the data as specified in the Question Paper
- The failure to include a calculated control in the data manipulation report, or where a calculated control was included it was not the one specified on the Question Paper.
- Errors in page layout with the failure to set margins or column widths as specified.
- The failure to indent the bulleted list by the amount specified on 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 searching, either by trying to search using the results of a previous search, rather than all the data, or through errors in the search criteria, or in the selection of the data for the database extract.
- The failure to resize the imported graphic or to text wrap around this graphic.
- Widows and/or orphans were not removed by inserting page breaks.
- Some candidates could not correctly align text, especially when asked to fully justify the body text of a document.