

Cambridge International Diploma in Business Advanced Level

Scheme of Work

5172 Effective Business Communication Core Module





UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE International Examinations

Introduction

The overall programme comprises three core and six option modules:

Core	Business Organisation and Environment Effective Business Communication Business Finance
Option	Marketing Human Resources Management Interpersonal Business Skills Business Start-Up Customer Care Information and communications technology

The modules have been chosen to reflect the key areas of business. It is important that in the delivery of each module, tutors appreciate that the programme is concerned with **Skills and Knowledge**. Students should be encouraged not only to demonstrate their knowledge but also their acquisition and development of complementary skills.

The programme has **four general aims** that are designed to encourage the students to:

- understand key concepts of business
- apply acquired skills to real work situations
- think about and resolve business problems
- work independently using their initiative

The over-riding objective of the programme is to prepare students either for employment or, if already in employment, for advancement. Employers expect those completing the Cambridge International Diploma in Business modules to be able to offer a working combination of skills and knowledge.

The accompanying scheme of work focuses specifically around the skills and knowledge of each competence criterion and clearly they must form the essence of the delivery of the modules.

The module Effective Business Communication, being advanced, requires a minimum of 60 learning hours. The scheme of work has been organised to offer those 60 hours within the class- or lecture-room setting and it is expected that additional learning time will be undertaken by students outside the timetabled hours working in study groups or undertaking independent study.

The key to the module's delivery is *flexibility*. There are several means at your disposal to help you deliver the module and the employment of an appropriate variety would be welcome. The standard class or didactic approach will still form the basis of much of your delivery but you might care to reinforce it by using the occasional outside or guest speaker, simulation, role-play, brainstorming session, or presentation. It is not necessary that you use them all during your teaching of this module but alternatives to 'talk and chalk' will help to encourage more student interest in the subject area.

There is, however, no substitute for a lively, motivating, and stimulating teacher! The main rule to follow is that you bring the module to life and make it relevant and interesting.

It is assumed that you have ready use of the basic tools of whiteboard, flip chart and OHP and, additionally, you may have access to the Internet. Other resources that will be readily available include textbooks, newspapers and journals, balance sheets, resource packs (often given out by, for example, banks and insurance companies), past examination papers (in particular their case studies). Please do not overlook

your own role in providing stimulus material e.g. task related to a current business event, photocopy of an article coupled with a discussion topic.

It is quite important that you appreciate that the International Diploma in Business programme is *holistic* or *integrated* i.e. the modules, whilst each is designed to be discrete or standalone, must be regarded as part of a whole course and a wider experience. A brief research of the modules in the syllabus compendium will indicate how the various modules have common areas and interlink with one another.

Scheme of Work

You may have to revise or change the accompanying scheme to suit your own purposes but it offers an advised approach to Effective Business Commucation. Activities or activity suggestions are included in the scheme but there may be more than you can use. Please keep in mind that 5172 is an examined module i.e. your students will sit a two-hour written paper in either May or October. It is helpful to your students that they have frequent tasks and assignments to complete and access to past papers.

The object of the scheme of work is to:

- offer you a guide and help to keep you on track throughout the delivery of the module
- give you structure and purpose to your teaching
- identify what and how you are going to teach
- indicate what resources you will require
- indicate how many pieces of work you will issue and to suggest their form

The scheme of work is broken down into a series of session plans and there is a guide as to how much time each session plan might take to deliver. It is not the intention that, necessarily, you spend two or three hours on a session plan in one teaching session but as you will know the timeframes for your classes so you must adjust the scheme accordingly.

What is assessed in this Module?

- understanding the business communication process
- producing effective written business documentation
- identifying the characteristics of effective group communication
- evaluating interview skills for effective communication
- using visual and graphical formats in business communication

Communication is a core skill that people use daily. It is important for this syllabus to be made relevant to students by making reference to how topics relate to students' everyday personal and business lives. This way they will not just learn about the subject but they will understand and apply what they have learnt.

At the outset it is good to look at a definition of communication: "...Communication in business is the process by which information is transferred between one individual or group and another, both within and outside the organisation. The communication can take place verbally or non-verbally and may be transmitted through a variety of communication methods such as reports, presentations, letters ... meetings." (Wood, 2001). This could be a useful introduction to the module to encourage students to think how wide this subject is but also how much they already know about it from their business and personal lives.

SCHEME OF WORK

This scheme of work is based around 60 hours study time with 3-hour sessions for 20 weeks but tutors should feel free to organise and deliver the topics as circumstances demand. Where textbooks are suggested in the resource section of the scheme, they refer to author and chapter or unit. In the activities column the questions refer to ones on past examination papers.

1.0 Understanding the business communication process

Session Plan One

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
 recognise the causes and consequences of poor communication (1.1) examine and explain methods and routes of business communication (1.2) 	 the communication process/cycle how we communicate (one-way and two-way communication and communication routes also internal and external) problems with communication (causes and consequences of poor communication)

Notes on delivery and activities

Skills audit

Tutors should compose a skills matrix which lists the syllabus areas in one column and in the next column should indicate a knowledge or skill rating (with 1 = low and 5 = high). Students should complete a self-assessed skills audit and submit it to tutors. Tutors will then have an idea of the knowledge/skills base of the student group and can then tailor the course and activities to their needs. Further discussion with group will identify areas of expertise in the workplace where tutors can use students' knowledge to help promote discussion. For example, where it becomes evident that one member of the group works regularly with computer graphics in presentations, this student could be called upon to provide a demonstration of the software used when this topic is covered in session plan fifteen.

- question 1a, 1b and 1c: October 2001 examination
- question 1a: May 2001 examination

- Wood, Unit 4
- Wood, Unit 1
- Blundel, Chapter 11

Session Plan Two

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
 identify characteristics and appropriateness of different forms of business communication (1.3) identify the principles of written communication (2.1) 	 introduction to different communication methods and their characteristics principles of written communication

Notes on delivery and activities

Group discussion

Tutors should initiate group discussion on when it is suitable to communicate using oral or written forms of communication. It would be useful to pick out key features of verbal communication such as speed and the ability to use body language. Encourage students to think of the difference between group and one-to-one verbal communication. Ensure students understand when written communication must be used and why. For example when a written record is needed. Need to emphasise which methods are used internally and those that are used to communicate with external audiences. Need to explain the difference between briefings, presentations and meetings.

Evaluation of written communication

Students to bring in a collection of good and bad examples of memos, letters, reports and to explain why some communications achieve their purpose and what is right/wrong with the other examples. Tutors may need to photocopy these examples before the lesson so all the group can see the items for discussion at the same time.

• question 1c: May 2001 examination

- Wood, Unit 1, 4 and 8
- Carysforth, Unit 2

2.0 Produce effective written documentation

Session Plan Three

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
 understand and apply techniques for writing an effective memorandum (2.2) 	memoranda

Notes on delivery and activities

Memo writing

Tutors should ask students to complete the following task.

'Your line manager has asked you to write a memo outlining the dates when you wish to take your holiday allocation. Your line manager needs a formal record of all requests and will confirm whether it has been established that the department is covered with sufficient staff over holiday periods.'

• question 1c: May 2001 examination

- Wood , Unit 8
- Carysforth, Unit 3
- Blundel, Chapter 9

Session Plan Four

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
 understand and apply techniques for writing business letters (2.3) 	business letters

Notes on delivery and activities

Letter writing

Tutors should ask students to complete the following task.

'Write a letter confirming that you accept a job offer and indicating when you can take up your new post.'

• question 2c: October 2001 examination

- Wood, Unit 8
- Carysforth, Unit 2

Session Plan Five

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
understand and apply techniques for writing reports (2.4)	business reports

Notes on delivery and activities

Report writing

Tutors should ask students to complete the following task.

'Write an informal report about a recent training course you have attended. State the cost, venue details and the value to you. You should recommend if other staff should attend a similar course or not.'

- question 2d: May 2001 examination
- question 5b: October 2001 examination

- Wood, Unit 8
- Carysforth, Unit 8 and 15

Session Plan Six

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
 investigate and evaluate 	faxes, emails and additional written communication
additional forms of written	 impact of technology on communication
communication (2.5)	
Notes on delivery and activiti	es
Using email graphics	
Tutora ta direct atudanta ta acar	and www.orango.co.uk to condividual/graphical amail postoordo to
a friend or colleague.	ess <u>www.orange.co.uk</u> to send visual/graphical email postcards to
Global communication	
	hell.co.uk and look at the world-wide page to see how websites ness communication. Students should look at the Shell location nearest to them.
Press releases	
Students should access www.tr	ansportforlondon.gov.uk to see good examples of press releases.
• question 2b: May 2001 example	mination
Resources	
• Wood, Unit 8 and 10	
 BPP, Chapter 16 	

• BPP, Chapter 16

Online Resources

- <u>www.orange.co.uk</u>
- www.shell.co.uk
- www.transportforlondon.gov.uk

Session Plan Seven

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
evaluate office automation and communication software (1.4)	applications of the computer

Notes on delivery and activities

Preparation of office technology evaluation

Tutors to direct students to research latest computer equipment, other office automation or advances in technology that improve the speed and way we communicate. Students should work in groups and ideally each group should choose a different topic to research. This way students can learn about a wide range of advances in equipment and technology. It is expected that this work will be continued into session eight, when presentations will be made.

They should produce an individual formal report and a group presentation to the rest of the group for the following session. The presentation should be a summary of their reports. Their investigation could be about any of the following or any other relevant topic:

- telephone technology and/or equipment e.g. ADSL and Internet telephones
- the mobile office
- computers hardware and software
- hand-held computers and laptops
- videoconferencing facilities
- future technologies

Reports should outline the purpose of the equipment/technology, likely costs, how it would be implemented in the workplace and how it would effect the work system (i.e. would it replace individual staff, reduce workload or involve training). Sources of information that could be used include catalogues sent by computer firms or local computer retailers. Alternatively use the website cited in the scheme of work for useful information.

- Blundel, Chapter 14
- Wood, Unit 10

Session Plan Eight

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
 evaluate office automation and communication software (1.4) 	office equipment

Notes on delivery and activities

Presentations about office technology

Tutors to direct students to research latest computer equipment, other office automation or advances in technology that improve the speed and way we communicate. Students should work in groups and ideally each group should choose a different topic to research. This way students can learn about a wide range of advances in equipment and technology.

They should produce an individual formal report and a group presentation to the rest of the group for the following session. The presentation should be a summary of their reports. Their investigation could be about any of the following or any other relevant topic:

- telephone technology and/or equipment e.g. ADSL and internet telephones
- the mobile office
- computers hardware and software
- hand-held computers and laptops
- videoconferencing facilities
- future technologies

Reports should outline the purpose of the equipment/technology, likely costs, how it would be implemented in the workplace and how it would effect the work system (i.e. would it replace individual staff, reduce workload or involve training). Sources of information that could be used include catalogues sent by computer firms or local computer retailers. Alternatively use the website cited in the scheme of work for useful information.

Online Resources

• <u>www.pcworld.co.uk</u>

Session Plan Nine

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
 identify characteristics and appropriateness of different forms of business communication (1.3) 	non-verbal communicationsmetacommunicationsparalanguage

Notes on delivery and activities

Oral communication

.

Tutors need to discuss oral or verbal communication which concerns what you say (the actual words you use) in relation to the following topics:

- paralanguage how you say something (your tone of voice)
 - non-verbal communication or body language which may reflect how you feel
 - kinesics (facial expressions) e.g. smile or eye contact
 - gestures e.g. shaking head
 - movements e.g. pacing up and down or drumming fingers on desk
 - proxemics (physical contact) e.g. shaking hands
 - positioning, such as, sitting behind a desk
 - posture e.g. leaning forward in a chair
 - para -linguistics (feedback sounds of surprise or agreement) e.g. 'uh-uh', 'whew' 'oops', 'tut-tut' etc.'
- metacommunications where it is what you **don't** say that conveys the message e.g. silence at the end of presentation could indicate that the audience is pausing for thought but often it can be very hostile and show rejection of the message that is being communicated

Tutors should illustrate to students how the sentence 'Your bank statement is ready now' can be said in different ways when the tone of voice is altered.

To help them tutors should say the sentence in the following ways:

- angrily i.e. as if you are a bank clerk who is angry that you have been interrupted (but you need to point out that this is a rude response)
- sarcastically i.e. as if you are a bank clerk who feels the customer has only waited a short while for the statement but has been complaining unjustly about a delay
- apologetically i.e. as if you are a bank clerk who is sorry that the statement has taken so long
- humorously i.e. as if you and the customer are both amused that the machine has taken so long to print out the statement

Ask students in groups to role play one of the situations below using a combination of paralanguage, body language and metacommunications are used to do the following:

- to 'block' an idea raised in a discussion
- to give positive feedback to an idea raised in a meeting
- to show hostility when dealing with a customer complaining about a product/service. (in other words using body language inappropriately)
- to show empathy when dealing with a dissatisfied customer
- question1b: May 2001 examination

Resources

- Wood, Unit 5
- Carysforth, Unit 7

4.0 Evaluate interview skills for effective communication

Session Plan Ten

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
 understand types and purpose of business interviews (4.1) identify the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders in the process (4.2) 	 purpose of interviews roles and responsibilities interview stages

Notes on delivery and activities

- question 4b and 4c: May 2001 examination
- question 4a and 4b: October 2001 examination

- Wood, Unit 6
- Blundel, Chapter 13

Session Plan Eleven

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
understand the use of questions to enhance the interview (4.3)	types of questions

Notes on delivery and activities

Interview role-play

Tutors to prepare students in the previous session that they will be working in pairs and during the next session. Before the session they must identify a job advertised in the press that they would like to be interviewed for. One student will assume the role of the interviewer and one will be the interviewee. The interviewer needs to prepare a list of interview questions that demonstrate the use of closed questions, open questions and hypothetical questions to elicit information from the interview candidate. Interviewees should prepare as if they were applying for the job. Interviewers should not ask leading questions. Tutors should provide feedback on interview technique and the use of various types of questions. If possible, it would be helpful to use a video to record interviews and playback interviews as part of the feedback process.

- question 4a: May 2001 examination
- question 4c: October 2001 examination

- Wood, Unit 6
- Blundel, Chapter 13

5.0 Identify and apply the use of visual aids in business communication

Session Plan Twelve

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
• identify and apply the use of a variety of graphical forms of written communication (5.1)	tablesbar charts

Notes on delivery and activities

• question 5a: October 2001 examination

Resources

- Wood, Unit 7
- Blundel, Chapter 4

Online Resources

- www.europa.eu.int
- <u>www.euromonitor.com</u>

Session Plan Thirteen

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
 identify and apply the use of a variety of graphical forms of written communication (5.1) 	pie chartsline graphs

Notes on delivery and activities

• question 5a and 5b: May 2001 examination

Resources

- Wood, Unit 7
- Blundel, Unit 4

Online Resources

- <u>www.oecd.org</u>
- www.un.org
- www.worldbank.org

Session Plan Fourteen

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
• examine the use of other visual charts (5.2)	organisation chartsflow chartsgantt charts

Notes on delivery and activities

Visual Data

Tutors should ensure that students practise using data to draw a range of graphs and charts. They should also practise interpreting the data contained in graphs and charts. Graphs, charts and data should be taken from current information sources such as newspapers, magazines and websites. A list of websites from which data and statistics can be taken can be found in the suggested resource list.

• question 5c: May 2001 examination

- Wood, Unit 7
- Blundel, Chapter 4

Session plan Fifteen

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
examine technical advances in producing effective visual communication (5.3)	 technology to aid visual presentation e.g. multi-media facilities, video and PowerPoint presentations

Notes on delivery and activities

Visual aids

Students should work in groups to deliver a presentation using visual methods, such as, PowerPoint, multi-media facilities, overhead projectors or even basic visual aids like flip charts. Tutors should ensure that each of the topics listed below is covered as far as possible by the different groups to avoid duplication of content.

Presentations should be on one of the following topics:

- how databases or spreadsheets or desktop publishing software or electronic notepads/diary systems are used in organisations to improve business communication (this task also covers competence criteria 1.4)
- how video technology or data projectors or PowerPoint and other multi-media facilities are improving the quality of business presentations.

Nb. A website reference is given in the resource column of the scheme of work to help students access potential sources of information about latest equipment.

• Question 5c: October 2001 examination

Resources

• BPP, Chapter 9

Online Resources

• <u>www.pcworld.co.uk</u>

Session Plan Sixteen

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
 understand and identify the group rules (3.1) evaluate characteristics of effective groups (3.2) 	 how groups operate group conflict group effectiveness

Notes on delivery and activities

Group development and conflict

Tutors to open up a discussion on how groups go through the following four stages of development:

- forming
- storming
- norming
- performing

Then tutors should lead students to thinking about the attributes of a group or what makes it recognisable to outsiders e.g. norms, purpose, hierarchy and exclusivity. This should be related to the groups that students operate in at work in their various roles in departments or task groups etc.

Finally tutors should ask students about the sources of conflicts in groups. Students should discuss how different ideologies, inappropriate communication and different obligations and responsibilities create conflict. Relate this to question 3a and 3b in the October 2001 examination paper and question 3a and 3c on May 2001 examination paper.

- question 3a and 3c: May 2001 examination
- question 3a and 3b: October 2001 examination

- Evans, Chapter 5
- Murdock and Scutt, Chapter 8
- Hardingham, Chapters 1-5

Session Plan Seventeen

Competence Criteria	Skills and Knowledge
recognise the characteristics of successful meetings (3.3)	 purpose of meetings roles of participants documentation e.g. agenda and minutes running meetings

Notes on delivery and activities

Meetings role-play

Ask the students to run a meeting as if they were the social club committee within a hypothetical organisation. They have to organise a large event or anniversary celebration. The meeting can be the first one of many but for the Committee's first meeting they must assign roles and responsibilities themselves, run the meeting within a set time limit, use an agenda and take minutes. Tutors should observe and give feedback on the meeting, how was it run and did members participate effectively during the meeting?

- question 3b: May 2001 examination
- question 3c: October 2001 examination

- Blundel, Chapter 11
- Wood, Unit 6

Session Plan Eighteen

Skills and Knowledge

- revision and practice examination questions
- emphasise key points about examination technique e.g. time management

Notes on delivery and activities

Examination practice

Tutors to refer to past papers and marking schemes on the <u>www.cie.org.uk</u> website and the examiner's reports.

The focus of this session should be to deal with common errors that appear in examinations. One is how students regularly misinterpret questions. For example get the class to discuss how they would approach question 2d or 4a on the May 2001 examination paper and tutors should indicate how the questions were misinterpreted in the past.

In addition tutors should advise students that there is now 15 minutes' reading time in the examination. Tutors should also spend time helping the students to work out how much time they should use for planning answers, how much time should be used for actually writing answers and how much time should be used at the end of the examination to check their answers. Good time management is often a key factor in examination success.

Students should be asked the week before this session to come prepared with questions about any topic areas that they have difficulty with.

Online Resources

<u>www.cie.org.uk</u>

Session Nineteen

Skills and I	Knowledge
--------------	-----------

mock examination

Notes on delivery and activities

Mock Examination Practice

Students should use the session to answer the most recent paper as 'mock' examination. The mock examination should be set under examination conditions and submitted to the tutor for marking and feedback for the following session.

Session Twenty

Sk	kills and Knowledge
٠	give feedback on mock examination performance and re-emphasise good examination
	technique

Resources

• examiner's report for tips to improve performance

Suggested Resources

Where possible tutors should make use of a variety of resources, textbooks and websites to ensure coverage of the syllabus. Tutors can identify and access the latest editions of suggested textbooks on <u>www.amazon.co.uk</u>. For this reason a wide selection of resources has been listed. However, it is important to note that not all the resources are needed and in fact, tutors should not be restricted to using the resources on this list. The resource list is merely a guide.

Not in order of importance:

- Blundel. 1998. *Effective Business Communication*. Published by Prentice Hall. ISBN0137427018
- BPP study text. 2001. *Customer Communications in Marketing*. Published by BPP study texts. ISBN 0751741132
- Carysforth. 1998. Communication for Work. Published by Heinemann. ISBN 0435455427.
- Dandi, Daley, MacKall. 1998. Teamwork Skills. Published by Ferguson Publishing.
- Evans. 1990. *People, Communication and Organisations*. Published by FT Prentice Hall. ISBN 0273025880
- Evans. 1999. Communicating with Customers. Published by Orion.
- Hardingham. 1999. *Working in Teams*. Published by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Murdock and Scutt. 1993. *Personal Effectiveness*. Published by The Institute of Management and Butterworth Heinemann. ISBN 0750606657
- Nolan.1989. Problem Solving, Communication and Teamwork. Published by Penguin.
- Smith. 1998. *Meeting Customer Needs*. Published by The Institute of Management and Butterworth Heinemann. ISBN 0750633913
- Wood. 2001. *Customer Communications in Marketing*. Published by Butterworth Heinemann. ISBN 0750653035

Websites

- <u>www.cie.org.uk</u>
- www.orange.co.uk
- www.shell.co.uk
- <u>www.transportforlondon.gov.uk</u>
- www.europa.eu.int
- www.un.org
- www.worldbank.org
- <u>www.pcworld.co.uk</u>