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| <b>Cambridge Career Awards in Office Administration - Foundation</b> |
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# TEXT PROCESSING

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| <b>Paper 5221</b> |
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## General comments

The candidates' overall performance was very varied. Some of the work submitted was of a high standard, with accurate work which 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 in the Text Processing Assessment because they failed the Speed Test (**Task 1**).

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

- Errors of agreement were not identified and corrected (such as "three hour" not corrected to "three hours" – 5221/C, **Task 2**).
- Punctuation errors (particularly apostrophe errors) were not identified and corrected (such as "hospitals' wing" not corrected to "hospital's wing" – 5221/C, **Task 3**).
- Frequent typing errors (such as "Bellow" instead of "Below", "tow" instead of "two" and "hives" instead of "gives" – 5221/B, **Task 3**).

## Comments on specific tasks

### **Task 1**

Although the majority of candidates completed all the text within the error tolerance, a number of candidates did not complete the task. A small number completed all the text but incurred more than the maximum errors allowed.

### **Task 2**

- Abbreviations were not expanded (such as "cos" and "opp" not expanded to "companies" and "opportunities" – 5221/B).
- Today's date was omitted.
- Subject heading was not typed with initial capitals and underlining as shown in the draft (such as "Casa Royale Development" – 5221/A).

### **Task 3**

- A variety of typing errors which ranged from omitted words to errors which the spellchecker would not identify as incorrect.
- The word underlined in the draft was often not underlined by the candidates (such as "not" – 5221/B).

#### Task 4

- The words “Our ref” were omitted by candidates.
- Abbreviations were not expanded (such as “Dr” [“Dear”], “ref” [“reference”] and “Sec” [“Secretary”] – 5221/B).
- The enclosure was not indicated.

#### Task 5

- Many candidates produced excellently displayed tasks which were accurate and well presented.
- A few candidates incurred errors for omitted words (such as “Steam room” – 5221/B).

#### Further general comments

Many candidates seemed to rely on spellcheckers and grammar checkers as their only means of proofreading. Frequently, errors such as “bays” (“days”), “ensues” (“ensures”) and “here” (“hire”), which the spellchecker would not identify as incorrect, were identified during the marking.

#### Task 1

Many of the candidates did not seem to have understood that they are allowed to proofread and correct errors *within the 5 minutes allowed*. Some candidates typed the text more than once. Candidates are required to type the text once only and to then spend the time remaining proofreading and correcting their work before printing.

The candidates who passed **Task 1** (Speed Test) are those who typed all the text, thus attaining the required speed of 25 wpm, within the error tolerance - 6 errors maximum.

#### Task 2

Today’s date is required, as is normal business practice. Omission of the date incurs 3 penalty errors.

The subject heading should have been typed 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 (as for a company’s house style).

Errors of agreement may be subject/verb or quantity/noun. These will include errors such as “the men was” (“the men were”) and “20 lorry” (“20 lorries”).

Enclosure(s) should be indicated. Any method is acceptable, for example “Enc”, “Encs”, “Att”, etc.

#### Task 3

Errors in apostrophes may be those which have been misplaced – such as “the chairmans’ office” (“the chairman’s office”) or superfluous apostrophes – such as “several purchaser’s of the house” (“several purchasers of the house”).

#### Task 4

Letters must be produced on letterheaded paper. This may be prepared as a template for the use of word processor operators or may be pre-printed. Candidates should not key in the letterheading 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 on the letter (as well as the memo, as mentioned previously).

#### Task 5

This task was very accurately typed and excellently displayed by the majority of candidates. The notices in all assessments (5221/A, 5221/B and 5221/C) were very inventive and methods of emphasis used to great effect. There were only occasional typing errors.

# COMMUNICATION AND TASK MANAGEMENT

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## Paper 5222

### General comments

No comment has been given for questions, or parts of a question, which were generally found to have been answered satisfactorily.

The quality of submissions was mixed with some candidates showing sound underpinning knowledge and/or relevant work experience, but others having little underpinning knowledge and/or no work experience support. There was some evidence that some candidates focused on selected aspects of the syllabus. Generally candidates would benefit from a more even approach to revising the whole of the syllabus.

Foundation Level Papers were disappointing in their presentation and legibility. Corrections should be neatly ruled through. 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.

Apart from appropriate underpinning knowledge, in some instances higher grades could have been achieved if candidates had been provided with guidelines on 'examination' techniques, e.g.

- Encourage candidates to skim through all questions in the assessment Paper, to become familiar with them. The questions should then be read again, carefully, highlighting all key points. As a precaution questions could usefully be skimmed through once again to make sure that nothing has been left out, and that the whole question has been read correctly.
- As each key point is answered, it should be ticked off and before moving onto the next question a check should be made to ensure that all key points have been answered.

This technique may appear to be time consuming but in most cases it can result in higher grades, improved submissions and clarification of knowledge and understanding.

Some candidates find it helpful and motivating to complete short or easier questions first. This can create a state of mental 'readiness' and trigger responses for other questions.

To give candidates every advantage possible Tutors should use past assessment Papers to analyse keywords, to clarify the potential responses to keywords and to provide relevant practice material.

Most candidates would benefit from gaining a wider perspective and understanding about the purpose and limitations of meetings. Generally candidates appear to have rote knowledge about the term 'meetings' and its level of importance within the office environment. They need to understand that meetings do not serve all purposes.

More use could be made of the Foundation Level assessment. It is not aimed at less able candidates but it is intended to be used as a qualification in its own right. It is a progressive route towards Advanced Level. It can be a motivator and support system for returners to work and inexperienced office workers. It also illustrates the type of basic office skills, knowledge and understanding, required in today's office environment. Additionally, it can provide practice experience of question types and wording, as well as topics and underpinning knowledge ready for further study.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 2**

Responses were particularly poor, in some instances.

#### **Question 3**

A mixed range of responses was seen to this question.

#### **Question 4**

It was pleasing to note that most candidates demonstrated an understanding of the importance of coordination, etc. and submitted good, practical, simplistic, and knowledgeable answers.

# OFFICE PROCEDURES

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## Paper 5223

### General comments

There was a pleasing improvement in the standard of work in 2002. However, occasionally there was evidence that only selected areas of the syllabus had been covered. Candidates should revise the full range of syllabus topics.

Congratulations to those Centres who submitted papers of excellence, as reflected in the number of distinctions achieved.

No comment has been given for questions, or parts of a question, which were generally found to have been answered satisfactorily.

Although some excellent work was seen, candidates would greatly benefit from guidance on how to read examination questions and how to ensure that each aspect of the question has been covered, before proceeding to the next question. Failure to do this frequently resulted in questions only being partly answered, resulting in the loss of valuable marks. For this reason it is essential that candidates are taught examination techniques to enable them to cope competently with all aspects of an assessment Paper.

One way of doing this is to:

- Encourage candidates to skim through all questions in the assessment Paper, to become familiar with them. The questions should then be read again, carefully, highlighting all key points. As a precaution questions could usefully be skimmed through once again to make sure that nothing has been left out and that the whole question has been read correctly.
- As each key point is answered, it should be ticked off, and before moving onto the next question a check should be made to ensure that all key points have been answered.

This technique may appear to be time consuming but in most cases it can result in higher grades, improved submissions and clarification of knowledge and understanding.

Some candidates find it helpful and motivating to complete short or easier questions first. This can create a state of mental 'readiness' and trigger responses for other questions.

To give candidates every advantage possible it is invaluable for Tutors to use past assessment Papers to analyse keywords, to clarify the potential responses to keywords and to provide relevant practice material.

Candidates without relevant work experience and/or with limited Tutor input could be better served if given the opportunity to sit the Foundation Level before attempting Standard Level. This could provide the opportunity of successful achievement as well as practical experience for the Standard Level. The questions for this Paper would also illustrate the type of basic office skills, knowledge and understanding they would be required to deal with in the Standard Level assessment Paper. It could also help them to identify their own weak areas.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Questions 1 - 4

A wide range of ability was seen ranging from very poor responses to some excellent answers.

# INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

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## General comments

The scheme showed 440% growth in entries between 2001 and 2002 including entries in Spanish and Greek.

**Module 5181**

**Core**

The most common errors included:

- 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 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 Formulas box prior to printing.
- The loss of data integrity during sorts. Several 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.