

CONTENTS

Cambridge Career Awards in Office Administration - Standard

TEXT PROCESSING	2
Paper 5231	2
COMMUNICATION AND TASK MANAGEMENT.....	4
Paper 5232	4
OFFICE PROCEDURES	6
Paper 5233	6
INTERPERSONAL BUSINESS SKILLS	8
Paper 5166	8
CUSTOMER CARE	9
Paper 5168	9
ORGANISING MEETINGS AND EVENTS.....	10
Paper 5237	10
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY.....	13
Module 5191	13

TEXT PROCESSING

Paper 5231

General comments

The overall performance of the candidates was varied. Some of the work submitted was excellent, with accurate and well-presented work. However, some candidates submitted scripts which were inaccurate and which showed little 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 “twenty retirement flat” not corrected to “twenty retirement flats” – 5231/C).
- Punctuation errors (particularly apostrophe errors) were not identified and corrected (such as “its’ ” not corrected to “its” – 5231/A).

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

Although most of the candidates completed the task within the error tolerance, there were some candidates who did not complete all the text, or who completed but incurred more than the maximum errors allowed.

Task 2

- Subject heading was not typed in the style shown in the draft (such as “NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES” instead of “New Business Opportunities” – 5231/A).
- Today’s date was omitted.

Task 3

- The inset paragraph was not indented from the left margin by the exact measurement instructed (such as 50 mm from the left margin – 5231/B).
- Apostrophe errors were not identified and corrected – such as “formations’ ” (“formations”) 5231/A.

Task 4

- The words “Our ref” were omitted by some candidates.

Task 5

- Many candidates produced excellently displayed tasks which were accurately typed.

Further general comments

Many candidates seemed to rely on spellcheckers and grammar checkers as their only means of proofreading. Frequently, errors such as “pleas”/“please”, “form”/“from”, “you”/“your” and “service”/“services”, which the spellchecker would not identify as incorrect, were identified by the Examiner.

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 any 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 35 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. Candidates are assessed on their ability to use a variety of styles as presented in the draft (as for a company's house style) – (page 12 of the Syllabus refers: bulleted point 3, Notes).

Errors of agreement may be subject/verb or quantity/noun. These will include obvious errors such as "the children was" ("the children were") and "40 boy" ("40 boys").

Enclosure(s) should be indicated in some way. Any method is acceptable, for example "Enc", "Encs", "Att", etc.

Paragraphing shown in the draft should be followed exactly. An instruction to create a new paragraph should be carried out as shown by the amendment sign.

Task 3

Errors in apostrophes may be those which have been misplaced – e.g. "peoples' views" ("people's views") or superfluous apostrophes – e.g. "continuous period's of working" ("continuous periods of working").

Page numbers should be inserted on continuation sheets, but a page number inserted on the first page of the task would not be penalised. Any style of page numbering and any font style/size is acceptable.

Some candidates incorrectly inserted a reference and/or date at the end of the text. Although this was not required, its inclusion was not penalised, as it is the normal house style in many businesses.

Task 4

Letters must be produced on letterheaded paper. This may be prepared as a template for 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).

The Special Mark (such as "CONFIDENTIAL" – 5231/B) should be typed exactly as shown in the draft. Capitalisation and wording should be copied and not altered in any way.

Most of the candidates typed an envelope, using a typewriter, even though they had produced the remainder of the work on a word processor. It is recommended that candidates use their copy/cut/paste facilities to produce the envelope (or label) as this prevents further errors occurring when envelopes are typed on a typewriter. Those candidates whose printers cannot produce envelopes may use an address label and any format and size is acceptable. Some candidates incurred penalties because they did not type the Special Mark on the envelope and some omitted a clear line space between the Special Mark and the name and address. These errors did not occur on the letter.

Task 5

This task was very accurately typed and excellently displayed by the majority of candidates. The notices (5231/A, 5231/B and 5231/C) were very inventive and methods of emphasis used to great effect. There were very few typing errors.

COMMUNICATION AND TASK MANAGEMENT

Paper 5232

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.

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.

In many instance submissions have been excellent. Weaker submissions were primarily due to lack of knowledge or appropriate work experience.

Most Centres entered adequately prepared candidates. However, a small number of candidates were inadequately prepared and would have benefited from further tuition and/or work experience, or from attempting the Foundation Level assessment (*see 'Comments specific to Foundation Level'*) before proceeding to the Standard Level.

Comments on specific questions

Standard Level 5232A

Question 1

Responses for this question were generally good.

Question 2

In **part (c)** candidates provided examples of various situations, e.g. distribution of mail, writing reports, sending faxes, printing documents, sorting files. However, the question asked for *five examples of non-verbal communication* used in day-to day work.

Question 3

Parts of a letter, e.g. letterhead, sender's name and address, reference, date, complimentary close, etc. *are not principles of written communication*. The syllabus describes what these are.

Question 4

This question asked for three rules to be considered when planning priorities for the day's task. It did not ask for the method used to be described. In several instances this was given as 'Top tray – urgent; 2nd tray – before end of the day', etc.

Distinction should be made between *rules* (i.e. regulations, set of laws), and *method* (i.e. means, process, scheme). Responses indicated that the question had not been carefully read. Minimal knowledge and understanding was evidenced in some cases.

Standard Level 5232B

Question 1

This question asked for the advantages of using fax. Unusually weak responses were given, ranging from 'paper can be bought at any bookstore' to 'can fax anything except restricted or confidential material'. Lack of basic underpinning knowledge was seen here.

Question 2

Responses were generally very weak for this question. Candidates and employees need to understand that time management is every employees' responsibility, not just the management's.

Question 3

A number of candidates felt that 'dealing with customers interfered with their time management plan'! It is important that candidates understand that flexibility needs to be built into every work plan, and that without customers a work plan would not be needed.

For some reason many candidates illogically related their answers to meetings. Perhaps this was a case of not reading the whole question carefully, or completely.

OFFICE PROCEDURES

Paper 5233

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.

At this Level the papers submitted indicated that questions were misinterpreted and not fully answered due to careless reading and not giving attention to keywords, suggesting that such candidates are unable to achieve the standard of detail and comprehension expected at Standard Level. Improvements in examination technique would help candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Standard Level 5233A

Question 1

There were good answers for **Part 3** but most only related their response to the personal attributes of a receptionist. However, they were asked to give 10 ways in which a receptionist can help to make the reception area a pleasant and businesslike place to visit.

Question 2

This question asked if emergency reporting procedures were the same in every organisation, and required the answer to be explained. Unfortunately all candidates only provided a list of procedures.

Standard Level 5233B

Very few candidates achieved a distinction for this Paper.

Question 1

This question asked candidates to prepare a flow chart (or a step-by-step list) showing how information flows within an organisation (i.e. the process for dealing with information received), and the methods of communication used.

Responses indicated misinterpretation of the question – often answered in terms of the sequence of dealing with incoming mail. However, no flow chart was produced, resulting in loss of marks.

Question 2

In **Part 2** some candidates incorrectly referred to robbery or accidents as requiring emergency evacuation of a building.

In **Part 3** some candidates gave answers such as 'we shut fire doors in an emergency so that people cannot walk into the door edge', 'for security of personal effects', 'to ensure no missing documents are taken by staff', etc. None of these answers were correct.

Standard Level 5233C

Question 1

Part 1 was generally well answered.

In **Part 2** few candidates were aware that poor quality of the original might make a fax message unreadable, and that it could be improved by photocopying with the ink density set higher and/or enlarging it and trying to fax it again.

Dirty marks on fax messages may be caused by a dirty print head or by thermal imaging paper being handled incorrectly.

Question 2

This question concerning emergency procedures which could occur in a business organisation evoked some very imaginative forward thinking responses. Most answers were unconventional, but credit was given according to the potential reality of individual statements.

Question 3

The responses for this question evidenced the range of procedures followed in different firms. This was taken into consideration when marking this question and credit was given accordingly.

INTERPERSONAL BUSINESS SKILLS

Paper 5166

General comments

Tutors at Centres need to read and understand the syllabus carefully in order to identify what is required for each module. The expected outcomes are clearly stated in each syllabus. Tutors should, where possible, provide candidates with access to the syllabus, so that candidates who are going to submit assignments for assessment can judge their own work against the demands of the syllabus. Weaknesses have included a failure to include all of the objectives in the candidates' work, no appropriate reference sources used and a failure by the candidate to comment on personal performance, or give opinions of changes, if the same task was undertaken again. Some submissions have been rather bulky but this would not jeopardise a candidate's pass category, if the documentation is appropriate.

It would be helpful to Examiners and Centres if Tutors/Assessors adopted a system of annotating candidates' work with the module objectives, i.e. 2.1, 2.3, 4.1 etc., entered at the appropriate places on their work. This could form a double check for them and their candidates, and would enable a more efficient assessment of their work. Candidates should be encouraged to submit business-like documents with page numbers, a contents page, a summary, and an appendix, as a minimum requirement.

Comments on specific papers

The conclusions/recommendations section of some of the assignments were very brief and no appropriate reference sources were used. Conclusions should be based on a discussion of interpersonal business skills as well as the results of the questionnaires used. Results of surveys could have been presented in the form of a pie chart or bar chart, as this is more business-like and appropriate. More thought should be given to the content of assignments, especially the different sections used. Candidates should be encouraged to refer to the syllabus in order to identify the assessment objectives, competence criteria and the skills and knowledge which their work is expected to demonstrate.

Candidates should aim to present well-laid out assignments with SAR sheets properly completed. Reference sources should be used. Candidates need to be aware that in order to achieve a pass, their work must provide evidence of the module objectives as listed in the module booklet.

These objectives are detailed in the module booklet under 'criteria for assessment'. The candidate's work should provide evidence that the candidates made a presentation to a small group and subsequently made a self-assessment of their performance in this role.

CUSTOMER CARE

Paper 5168

General comments

Tutors at Centres need to read and understand the syllabus carefully in order to identify what is required for each module. The expected outcomes are clearly stated in each syllabus. Tutors should, where possible, provide candidates with access to the syllabus, so that candidates who are going to submit assignments for assessment can judge their own work against the demands of the syllabus. Weaknesses have included a failure to include all of the objectives in the candidates' work, no appropriate reference sources used and a failure by the candidate to comment on personal performance, or give opinions of changes, if the same task was undertaken again. Some submissions have been rather bulky but this would not jeopardise a candidate's pass category, if the documentation is appropriate.

It would be helpful to Examiners and Centres if Tutors/Assessors adopted a system of annotating candidates' work with the module objectives, i.e. 2.1, 2.3, 4.1 etc., entered at the appropriate places on their work. This could form a double check for them and their candidates, and would enable a more efficient assessment of their work. Candidates should be encouraged to submit business-like documents with page numbers, a contents page, a summary, and an appendix, as a minimum requirement.

Comments on specific parts

Some failed assignments had many spelling errors that should have been corrected before submitting. The layout of their work was not business-like and the use of capital lettering throughout distracts from the assignment. Also, the demonstrated module objectives were weak and could have been extended.

Candidates should aim to present well-laid out assignments with SAR sheets properly completed. Reference sources should be used. Candidates need to be aware that in order to achieve a pass, their work must provide evidence of the module objectives as listed in the module booklet.

These objectives are detailed in the module booklet under 'criteria for assessment'. The candidate's work should provide evidence that the candidates made a presentation to a small group and subsequently made a self-assessment of their performance in this role. Appropriate reference sources need to be used. Work which has a business-like presentation is more likely to show an understanding of the importance of customer care.

ORGANISING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Paper 5237

General comments

The overall performance of the candidates in their assignments ranged from excellent to rather poor. Some candidates were obviously well prepared and correctly organised a meeting, as required. They then produced reports detailing how the meeting had been organised and the documentation and methods of communication, which had been used.

A few candidates produced reports that demonstrated all Distinction Level criteria and some demonstrated all Pass criteria. There were, however, a disappointing number who did not succeed.

Some candidates were not successful because they did not submit completed Student Assessment Records. An SAR should be completed and signed by each candidate and his/her Tutor.

The candidates who organised an event, and not a meeting as required, were not penalised as they may have commenced work on their assignment before their Centres had received the 2002 syllabus.

Comments on the work of candidates

Candidates often produced reports that were legible and very detailed. However, much of the information contained within the reports appeared to have been produced from textbooks and explained how a meeting or event *should* be organised. Many candidates' assignments were well in excess of the maximum 1,800 words, largely because of this.

Information of how a meeting or event should be organised was included and candidates often detailed the various aspects that can be used to make a meeting or event successful. However, there was often very little in the way of specifics detailing what the candidates themselves actually did, how they did it, when and where, with whom they communicated and how they did so, etc.

Very few candidates mentioned the communication methods they used. Copies of letters, e-mails, agenda, notice of meeting, minutes, chairperson's agenda and transcripts of telephone conversations were attached but no detail was given of what communication methods were used and, more importantly, the factors, which influenced their choice.

Candidates are required to assess the planning, organising and monitoring methods they actually used. They should then state whether or not these were successful and what they would do differently next time.

Some of the assignments were rather confusing. For example, candidates produced checklists for meetings, although they had organised events.

Many candidates included lengthy descriptions of the secretarial and chairpersons' roles and procedures and lists of meeting terminology. Although these were not required, candidates were not penalised in any way for their inclusion in the final assignment.

Some assignments were very muddled. Candidates appeared to have included mini exercises carried out during lessons. It was often very difficult to decipher which information was part of the class exercises and which was part of the work of the final assignment. Occasionally, candidates produced some documentation but rarely included a work schedule or action plan. A partial checklist was occasionally included within the minutes of a meeting but the assignment then went on to detail how an event should be organised.

Further general comments

The Student Assessment Record (SAR) – this should be completed when the candidate has achieved all objectives reliably, consistently and without help. The SAR should be signed and dated by both candidate and Tutor. Each candidate must submit a completed SAR with his/her assignment.

Candidates are advised to read the assignment guidelines given in the syllabus very carefully. The step-by-step approach to the final assignment is highly recommended.

Candidates are advised to discuss with their Tutors the meeting they would be able to organise. It is recommended that they organise a small, informal meeting, rather than try to over-stretch themselves by organising a large, formal meeting. Once they have worked out what type of meeting could be organised, they should then work out how this could be done. They should write a plan of how they intend to carry out the various tasks, which will be required.

Candidates may choose to work on their own or may wish to work with a fellow student or work colleague. They should plan their duties and negotiate the allocation of these duties. Each candidate must produce evidence of his/her own planning and work schedule. Copies of documentation such as agendas, minutes, notes, short reports, notices of meetings, telephone calls, etc should be included in the report.

Those candidates who cannot organise an actual meeting may organise a simulated meeting. All the assessment requirements listed in the syllabus, however, should still be met.

Candidates should consider:

- what type of meeting they will be organising
- the documentation which would be appropriate for that meeting
- how they propose to organise the meeting
- the time, date and venue for the meeting
- what facilities they have to help them in this task
- ways to ensure that they are organised – methodical working
- production of clear documentation
- what communication methods would be appropriate
- timescales involved.

The production of the report should be considered from the beginning, not left to the last minute. Candidates who made notes and who have thought out the organisation of the meeting and the report clearly were often the most successful in their assignments.

Candidates may wish to note the following points for successful report writing:

- A brief introduction at the start of the report, describing exactly what the candidate has organised.
- The actual planning and organisation of the meeting.
- Full details on the organising and monitoring methods that were used.
- A brief statement as to whether or not the organising and monitoring methods were successful.
- A short paragraph of what the candidate would do differently next time, if appropriate.
- A brief paragraph giving the communication methods used by the candidates, together with an explanation of the factors, which influenced their choice. For example, a need to inform someone of something urgently would probably be dealt with by telephone. However, if the person was not available, a message could be left on the person's telephone answering machine and then an e-mail sent to ensure the person receives the information.
- Copies of all documentation – including a Chairperson's Agenda, if appropriate, and transcripts of telephone and face-to-face conversations.
- A conclusion on the success of the meeting.

Tutors may wish to note that lists of secretarial and chairperson's roles and procedures, descriptions of basic meeting terminology and explanations on the differences between meeting notes, minutes and precis are no longer required as part of the assignment.

Finally, Centres should submit the candidate's assignment to CIE together with the Student Assessment Record (SAR), making sure that it has been completed, signed and dated. Only the final report detailing how the candidate organised the meeting should be sent to CIE – the inclusion of a candidate's mini assignments/tasks undertaken during class time is not required.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Module 5191

General comments

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

The most common errors included:

- Errors in page layout with the failure to set margins or column widths as specified.
- 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.
- 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, through errors in the search criteria, or in the selection of the data for the database extract.
- Errors in sorting the data as specified in the question paper.
- 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.