

CAMBRIDGE

INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

CAREER AWARD IN
OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
COMMUNICATION AND TASK MANAGEMENT (5242)
ADVANCED LEVEL
A2002

MARK SCHEME

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MARKING

TASK 1 (49 marks)

- 1.2 Purpose of task and competence required; use of appropriate communication technique to inform, collaborate, co-operate, share information.
- 3.2 Characteristics of appropriateness of different methods of business of communication: letters.
- 3.3 Understand and apply the principles of written communication: letters: clear aim, logical structure, appropriate style, avoiding distractions to the reader, revising and removing unclear language, thinning long or wordy sentences and paragraphs, avoiding unexplained abbreviations; tone sensitive to reader's interpretation, importance to the firm, tactful and diplomatic. Style appropriate to the reader. Clarity through short words, sentences and paragraphs.

1. 8 DOs and 8 DON'Ts checklist to be used by staff when writing letters (32 marks)

DO be concise	2
but	
DON'T be brief to the point of abruptness	2
DO keep content simple	2
but	
DON'T use cliches	2
DO try to be helpful	2
but	
DON'T be over-familiar, vague, or ineffective	2
DO try to be relevant.....	2
but	
DON'T use jargon or official terms.....	2
DO use formal language in business document (generally).....	2
but	
DON'T use abbreviated language such as: 'I'll, don't, shouldn't, etc. in <i>letters</i>	2
DO use business specialist jargon if it is unavoidable	2
but	
DON'T use jargon, specialist or otherwise, if a more straightforward word will serve the same purpose	2
DO use only one word to convey your meaning.....	2
but	
DON'T use tautology (i.e. using two words or phrases with the same meaning), e.g. 'In conclusion, I must finally ...'; 'Finally, in conclusion ...';	2
DO try to be tactful and courteous	2
and	
DON'T forget that we all have feelings and may interpret letters in different ways	2

DO use short words and phrases	2
but	
DON'T use longer equivalent.....	2
DO keep in mind the reader and the reason for your letter	2
and	
DON'T ramble on illogically, insensitive to the reader's interpretation	2
DO check spelling, punctuation, and grammar.....	2
and	
DON'T dispatch letters with spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors	2
DO remember that a letter provides a written record	2
and	
DON'T forget that it is a permanent reflection of you and the organisation's image	2

2. 7 guidelines when writing letters to be sent overseas (14 marks)

write short sentences	2
keep paragraphs short.....	2
use simple language	2
avoid colloquialisms or jargon	2
give the meanings of any abbreviations	2
avoid long introductory paragraphs	2
avoid long concluding paragraphs	2
avoid using words which may have different meanings in different countries	2
avoid words with a political inference	2
avoid words with a dual meaning	2
do not use any word you are not one hundred per cent sure about.....	2

3. One example of an over-used business phrase/cliché (numerous examples possible) (3 marks)

"We thank you for your communication ...", instead of "Thank you for your letter ...";	
"Your letter of the 26 th ultimo ..." instead of "Your letter of (<i>and last month's date</i>)"	3

TASK 2 (20 marks)

- 2.1 Coping with negative behaviour and conflict.
- 2.3 Listening and reacting constructively; avoiding manipulations; picking the right moment.
- 2.4 Recognising the difference between aggression and assertiveness. Verbal and non-verbal techniques for dealing with unacceptable behaviour; reacting to criticism.
- 4.1 Recognise appropriate communication styles in the context of face-to-face or interview situations when disagreeing.
- 4.2 Building on other's ideas, summarising, indicating support when appropriate, respecting other's views, sticking to issues (not personalities) when disagreeing. Asking appropriate questions: to get information, to confirm, to get commitment and agreement, to get understanding. Use questions effectively. Asking open, closed, probing, hypothetical, leading, and rhetorical questions appropriately.

- **5 suggestions for handling aggressive team members (10 marks)**

- give them time to cool down 2
- purposefully choose a quiet time to talk 2
- prepare specific ways to gain their attention, before approaching them 2
- plan ways to gain attention to prepare them for better listening 2
- diffuse some aggression by acknowledging true or important aspects of their ideas 2
- acknowledge true or important aspects of their ideas to make them open to your ideas 2
- keep in mind that acknowledgment does not necessarily mean agreement 2
- always stand up for your position 2
- always hold your ground 2
- do not back down or change your ideas to pacify them - it is likely to reinforce their aggression 2

- **5 suggestions for handling negative team members (10 marks)**

- directly but calmly disagree with them 2
- do not encourage more negativism by remaining silent or agreeing with them 2
- stop the momentum of criticism by firmly stating positive opinions 2
- avoid arguments by restating objective opinions 2

avoid arguments by restating positive opinions	2
ignore any brief negative comments to discourage negativism.....	2
continually ask for, and expect, effective and practical solutions to the problem.	2
repetitively ask for practical solutions to the problem, to draw out new ideas	2

TASK 3 (18 marks)

2.2 Roles of team members: negotiators.

- The 3 main approaches to negotiation, and the purpose of each approach are (18 marks)

<u>Approach:</u>	PUT OFF	3
<u>It's purpose/value:</u>	Only useful if you want to buy time	3

<u>Approach:</u>	WIN/LOSE.....	3
<u>It's purpose:</u>	To get the best deal at the expense of the other party	3
	Only useful as a one-off strategy	3
	Not suitable for people you wish to deal with more than once.....	3

<u>Approach:</u>	LOOK AT BOTH SIDES	3
<u>It's purpose:</u>	An essential part of any negotiating strategy	3
	Useful at any point in the negotiation	3

<u>Approach:</u>	CO-OPERATE	3
<u>It's purpose:</u>	An excellent starting point for any negotiation	3
	A recommended strategy to adopt.....	3
	Each party recognises the other's position and respects their viewpoint	3

<u>Approach:</u>	SOLVE THE PROBLEM	3
<u>It's purpose:</u>	Both parties define a solution to the problem (i.e. agree a contract)	3
	Useful for a win/win deal to lay firm foundations for future trading	3

TASK 4 (13 marks)

- 2.2 How people express themselves.
- 2.4 Use of body language.
- 4.1 Body language in face-to-face communication.
- 4.2 Indicating support when appropriate.

- Non-verbal communication is not a reliable form of communication because (5 marks)
 - it does not always agree with what is being said 5
 - it gives its own messages, which are not always appropriate 5
- 2 occasions when candidate might use non-verbal communication in a face to face situation (8 marks)

NB Answers to this question will prove to be very varied.

Allocate 4 marks to each of 2 responses, which should clearly demonstrate a clear understanding of non-verbal communication.

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MARKING

TASK 1 (42 marks)

- 1.1 Apply an understanding of the objectives of the task: define objectives, common purpose, need for time scales and deadlines.
- 1.2 Identify and analyse task requirements to clarify working relationships, competence required, breaking down more complex tasks into manageable sections. Use appropriate communications techniques: to inform, collaborate, co-operate and share information.
- 4.2 Use positive behaviour to build on other's ideas, respect other's views, to stick to issues when disagreeing; ask appropriate questions and use questions effectively to get information, understanding, confirmation, agreement and commitment.

a) 3 things that staff are really saying when they say "My boss sets such unrealistic goals/targets" and 3 possible reasons why they feel they can make this statement (18 marks):

- 1. STATEMENT: They cannot believe in the outcome3
POSSIBLE JUSTIFICATION: Perhaps the M.D. has been known to state grand plans without following them through.3
- 2. STATEMENT: They don't believe the outcome is achievable3
POSSIBLE JUSTIFICATION: Perhaps they have had previous experience of ideas, or figures, being wishfully pulled out of thin air!3
- 3. STATEMENT: They cannot figure out what the M.D. really wants the outcome to be3
POSSIBLE JUSTIFICATION: Perhaps the goal has been expressed in a complicated or ambiguous way, making it impossible to have a clear focal point3

b) When a team member concentrates only on the long-term aspect of a Team's primary goal (4 marks)

goal setting often fails4

c) When a team's primary goal is broken down into component mini goals the likely result is (4 marks)

- results are quicker4
- OR
- achievement motivation is possible4
- OR
- they plan for the longer term but act for the present4

d) 4 prerequisites that team leaders and team members must have before team trust breaks.
(16 marks)

THEY MUST

- have clear, consistent targets - not only to give direction but also as a foundation for trust4
- be open, fair, and willing to learn - the more open, fair and willing to listen individuals are, the more they are likely to receive the trust of others4
- respect the opinion of others - trust without respect is not good enough - focus on the task, not a team member4
- create an atmosphere which makes team members feel empowered/free to act4
- be decisive - people do not trust people who are indecisive - a bad decision is better than no decision4
- support all other team members - loyalty is the mainstay of building team trust4
- be sensitive to the needs of team members - by showing awareness and sensitivity to the needs of other team members4
- take responsibility for team actions - take personal responsibility for the actions of the team as a whole, whether a team leader or not. Avoid finger pointing at all costs4
- give credit to team members - prima donnas set the pace for team destruction4

TASK 2 (45 marks)

1.2 Identify and analyse task requirements: data collection using basic techniques, e.g. tables, diagrams and charts.

2.1 Use of ground rules for solving tension (within a team).

• 6-step formula for controlling and solving problems when involved in a team task (24 marks)

1. Investigate the problem and collect the information/data4
2. Define the problem/issue and determine the cause4
3. Generate ideas/alternatives/options4
4. Select a tentative best solution/make decision4
5. Plan for action/implement the solution4
6. Follow up the implementation of the solution to the problem4

- Brief description as to how the best method to collect as much information as possible would be decided (4 marks)
brainstorming session with the team.....4
OR
consensus reaching with the team.....4
- 4 main types of charts which are used for the display of data (8 marks)
bar charts2
histograms.....2
pie charts.....2
scatter diagrams.....2
run (trend) graphs)/line graphs2
spider diagrams.....2
- The type of chart used (3 marks)
will be determined by the patterns, trends, or relationships it is wished to show3
- Give 3 advantages of using data display (i.e. charts) in preference to tables of raw data are (6 marks)
they help to turn raw data into usable information2
they are visual, interesting and easier to use than tables of raw data2
people tend to give time to pictorial presentations which demand very little reading skill or concentration ...2
they are quick ports of reference2
they aid understanding - at a glance.....2
they aid memory2

TASK 3 (11 marks)

- 1.1 Understanding the objectives of the task: need for timescales and deadlines; outline methods of achieving goals.
- 1.2 Duties and responsibilities; competence required; need for flexibility and initiative when engaged in the task; planning resources; breaking tasks into manageable sections.
- 1.3 Prioritising work, identifying objectives; establish time scales

- The 2 primary constraints of project planning are (2 marks)

time 1

budget1

performance criteria1

- 4 essentials of planning for projects of different sizes (8 marks)

establish goals and objectives2

brainstorm all the necessary tasks to be completed2

apply the 3 primary constraints of project planning (i.e. estimated task duration - time; task objectives and specifications - performance criteria, and task budget - monetary, human, equipment resources)2

determine to whom chunks of the tasks can be delegated2

determine the general order in which the chunks of tasks must be completed2

create a rough Gantt Chart for all tasks (in chronological order)2

brainstorm as many potential problems as possible and make contingency plans for meeting the 3 primary constraints of project planning2

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MARKING

TASK 1 (26 marks)

- 1.1 Use of team discussion to determine interests and strengths of team members; measures to judge the achievement of objectives.
- 1.2 Working relationships.
- 1.3 Feedback: when, and in what form.
- 2.1 Ground rules: giving and receiving feedback.

1. 7 ways in which feedback can be given to teams

It may be from (14 marks)

- one to another 2
- team leaders 2
- clients 2
- a group session 2
- their own organisation 2
- results shown by figures 2
- written reports, etc 2
- the spoken word 2
- telephone calls (when appropriate) 2
- notes on documents 2
- a scheduled session 2
- a formal session 2

4 forms feedback may take (8 marks)

IT MAY BE

- in an official manner 2
- in an unofficial manner 2

in reflective mode	2
'off the cuff'	2
spontaneously	2
during 'corridor chat'	2
at a team meeting.....	2
by 'just happening'.....	2
in the form of the long term picture	2
in the form of the overall picture	2
face-to-face.....	2
by pre-arranged review sessions	2

2. Frequency of feedback to team members (4 marks)

YES, team members should receive feedback on a continuous/ongoing basis 2

BECAUSE

achievement of individual tasks is ongoing, and feedback can motivate individuals towards the next step..... 2

OR BECAUSE

team members generally have a hunger to measure what they are doing in every way 2

OR BECAUSE

teamwork needs constant motivation to maintain enthusiasm 2

TASK 2 (16 marks)

- 3.1 Explain the need for communication in business: effective and dissemination of information; determining the needs of clients and responding to those needs; consequences of poor communication; needs of external organisation not identified; barriers to communication.
- 3.3 Letters: appropriate to the receiver. Tone: sensitive to reader's interpretation, status. Importance to the firm.

1 4 points illustrating the effect that inappropriately composed letters tells the recipient about the author and the organisation (16 marks)

the writer's lack of quality/skill	4
the lack of control and attention to the business image	4
they have no concept of recognised courtesies	4
they have and permit a negative attitude towards letter writing	4
they have and permit a thoughtless approach to work	4
they have a couldn't care less attitude	4
they have a disrespectful attitude towards recipients	4
they are badly managed/overseen	4
quality staff are not employed	4
appropriate staff are not employed	4

2 4 reasons how poorly composed memos can create problems with interpersonal relationships

If the following aspects of composition are not considered interpersonal relationships could be affected (8 marks)

style	2
tone.....	2
sensitivity	2
clarity	2

TASK 3 (24 marks)

- 1.1 Defining objectives, use of team briefing to agree objectives, need for timescales and deadlines, outline methods to achieve objectives; terms of reference
- 1.2 Identify and analyse task requirements: competence required; informing, collaborating, sharing information, co-operating.
- 1.3 Feedback: when, to whom and in what form.
- 2.1 Use of ground rules: action plans, feedback, individual and team accountability, monitoring, agendas to help team members remain on track

- Business standard Agenda layout 4
- 10 items to be included on an Agenda of an initial team meeting (20 marks):
 - terms of reference (to be established) 2
 - objectives (to be agreed)..... 2
 - possible activities required by the objectives 2
 - timescale available 2
 - action planning needs and action planning 2
 - distribution of tasks and individual roles 2
 - methods of communication and co-ordination to be employed..... 2
 - monitoring and progress procedures (to be agreed)..... 2
 - progress reports (target dates and their needs)..... 2
 - ground rules (to be agreed)..... 2
 - briefing sessions (to be agreed) 2
 - deadlines for individual tasks (to be agreed) 2
 - maintenance of organised notes for preparation of individual team task reports 2
 - draft report (agreement on its needs)..... 2
 - deadline for final report..... 2

TASK 4 (26 marks)

- 1.1 Describe and apply an understanding of the objectives of the task: nature of good objectives; use of objectives to plan and monitor the work and individual tasks; need for timescales and deadlines,
- 1.2 Identify and analyse task requirements: duties and responsibilities, competence required; use of appropriate communication technique to inform.
- 1.3 Establishing timescales and deadlines; agree criteria for an effective activity plan.; setting progress review dates.
- 2.1 Purpose of agendas: to help team members to prepare and remain on track; action plans; expectations; importance of agreement on how the team will work together and the level of group commitment; importance of agreement on how the team will work together and the level of group commitment.

- The purpose of an Action Plan is (3 marks)

to outline tasks to be undertaken to achieve a specific objective 3
OR
to clearly state what you hope to achieve in the future 3

- Main benefit of an Action Plan is that it (3 marks)

shows the time scale over which a series of events will take place 3

- 10 guidelines for preparing successful Action Plans (20 mark)

identify and agree the main objective 2
identify/agree the target date for achieving the overall objective 2
as a team, brainstorm all the things that have to be done 2
be as specific as possible about what has to be done 2
discuss and set clear objectives for each key area 2
discuss and agree who is going to do what and when 2
map out the steps to achieve your targets 2
identify constraints, which will influence the time factor 2
set a target date for each goal 2
ensure targets are clear and realistic..... 2

be prepared to modify existing work habits2

don't set unachievable targets2

make provision for regular reviews2

make provision for continuous feedback to team as a whole2

make provision for continuous feedback to individual team members2

write up the Action Plan, sign and date it2