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# TEXT PROCESSING

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| <b>Paper 5231</b> |
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## 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 practical assessment because they failed the Speed Test (**Task 1**). They must be able to key in all the text (to achieve the minimum speed of 35 wpm) within the error tolerance (6 errors maximum) and within the time allowed (5 minutes). Some candidates were successful in the Speed Test but incurred too many errors in **Tasks 2 – 5**.

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

- Errors of agreement were not identified and corrected (such as “necessary materials and equipment is” not corrected to “necessary materials and equipment are” – 5231/A).
- Apostrophe errors were not identified and corrected (such as “yesterdays’ working breakfast” not corrected to “yesterday’s working breakfast” – 5231/A).
- Keying in errors that had not been identified during the proofreading of the tasks (such as “gull” instead of “full” and “than” instead of “that” (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 within the 5 minutes allowed. Some candidates completed all the text but incurred more than the maximum 6 errors allowed.

### **Task 2**

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

### **Task 3**

- The inset paragraph was not indented from the left margin the exact measurement instructed (such as 35 mm from the left margin – 5231/A).

### **Task 4**

- The words “Our ref” omitted.
- Today’s date omitted.
- Envelopes or labels not produced – some candidates used a sheet of A4 paper.

### **Task 5**

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

### **Further general comments**

Many candidates seemed to rely on spellcheckers and grammarcheckers as their only means of proofreading. There were errors such as “EXHIBITIONS” (“EXHIBITIONS”), “GUDELINES” (“GUIDELINES”) and “rear future” (“near future”).

#### **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*. Candidates are required to type the text once only and to 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 within the 5 minutes allowed, thus achieving 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 as referred to in the Syllabus.

The subject heading should be keyed in 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 (such as may be required by a company’s house style) – the Syllabus refers to this.

Errors of agreement may be subject/verb or quantity/noun. These will include errors such as “the builders is” (“the builders are”) and “14 pupil” (“14 pupils”).

#### **Task 3**

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.

Errors in apostrophes may be those which have been misplaced – e.g. “mens’ clothing” (“men’s clothing”) or superfluous apostrophes – e.g. “all proceed’s” (“all proceeds”).

Page numbers should be inserted on continuation sheets – any style and font 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 – some candidates used plain A4 paper. The letterheading may be prepared as a template for the use of word processor operators or may be pre-printed. Candidates must *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 – the full style is preferred, e.g. “31 December 2003”.

The Special Mark (such as “PRIVATE” – 5231/A) should be keyed in exactly as shown in the draft, including capitalisation.

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 from occurring. Those candidates whose printers cannot produce envelopes may use an address label and any format and size of label is acceptable. Some candidates incurred penalties because they did not type the Special Mark (such as “PRIVATE” – 5231/A) on the envelope and some omitted a clear line space between the Special Mark and the name and address. These errors had not occurred on the letter.

#### **Task 5**

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

# COMMUNICATION AND TASK MANAGEMENT

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| <b>Paper 5232</b> |
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## General comments

The submission of work was similar to that produced by candidates in 2002 with many candidates having sound underpinning knowledge and/or relevant work experience but scripts produced by a few candidates indicated insufficient knowledge and no evidence of work experience.

It must again be stressed that some Centres are still focusing on selected aspects of the Syllabus resulting in huge gaps in candidate knowledge and thus an inability to answer questions well.

There are no comments for questions, or parts of a question, which were generally found to have been answered satisfactorily. *Papers B and C* in some of the levels have not been used by Centres and therefore there will be no comments on those Papers in this Report.

Centres have taken note of the comments made in the previous Report concerning Foundation Level candidates and it was pleasing to see the improvement in both presentation and legibility of scripts. At all times 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. Presentation for both Standard and Advanced Levels is generally satisfactory.

The comments in the Report for 2002 concerning examination techniques has also been accepted by most Centres although it is still a concern that some candidates are omitting to answer parts of questions or are not providing the requested number of points in their answers. This could be because of limited knowledge but it could also be as a result of not reading the question, poor proofreading skills or not ticking off a question as it has been answered.

Candidates must be given the opportunity to use past Assessment Papers and to sit mock examinations under timed conditions. This not only assists candidates in their examination preparation but provides them with feedback and to know their individual weaknesses in parts of the Syllabus.

Rote learning appears to be used by some Centres for selected parts of the Syllabus and, whilst this is sometimes useful, candidates often find it difficult to apply that knowledge to the questions being asked.

Many Centres had submissions which were excellent.

However, there were some candidates who were not at the level required to succeed in this examination and would have benefited from being entered for the Foundation Level. These candidates did not have the underpinning knowledge and/or work experience to understand the questions or to produce the level of answer needed to gain satisfactory marks.

## Comments on specific papers

*Paper 5232A*

### **Question 1**

The third part of this question was generally misinterpreted. Candidates were requested to give ways in which members could be motivated and instead of suggesting using their opinions, giving training etc. the candidates listed all types of rewards which could be given.

### **Question 2**

Candidates were asked to state the disadvantages of written communication and some based the whole of the response on the costs of written communication such as envelopes, paper and stamps. Lacking individuality, delayed feed back etc. was what was required as part of the four disadvantages.

### **Question 3**

The second part of this question focused on positive behaviour when communicating on the telephone and weaker candidates gave a list of characteristics of the person making the call rather than respecting the other person's view or building on the other person's ideas.

### **Question 4**

Candidates needed to use their knowledge of e-mail systems to answer this question. Many candidates seemed to have a very limited practical understanding of sending e-mails and gave answers such as 'ensure the computer is plugged in' and 'must have a computer'.

*Paper 5232C*

### **Task 1**

This question related to Agendas. Many candidates appeared to have had practice in composing and using meetings documents and they scored highly on this question but others had little knowledge of Agendas, they did not know the reasons for having one, confusing it with a Notice of Meeting and in some cases with Minutes of Meetings.

### **Task 2**

Candidates were required to compose a memorandum which explained the role of a team negotiator and the skills and talents of such a person. Candidates scored well on the layout of the memorandum, however, they had limited or no knowledge of the role of the negotiator but did achieve some marks for the skills that such a person should have.

### **Task 3**

Some candidates had been well prepared both practically and theoretically on writing reports but poorer candidates repeated their responses for preparing, structuring and planning the style of reports.

# OFFICE PROCEDURES

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| <b>Paper 5233</b> |
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## **General comments**

The general standard of work in 2003 has continued to improve with many candidates obtaining distinctions.

However, as with the Communication and Task Management Examinations there is evidence to indicate that only selected areas of the Syllabus had been covered. Candidates must have underpinning knowledge and/or work experience to ensure full coverage of the Syllabus.

*Papers B and C* in some of the levels have not been used by Centres and therefore there will be no comments on those Papers in this Report. No comments have been made for questions, or parts of a question, which were generally found to have been answered satisfactorily.

As reported in 2002, although excellent work has been seen, some candidates would benefit from guidance on how to read examination questions and how to ensure that every part of the question has been attempted. Several candidates omitted whole or parts of questions, or, did not give the requested number of points.

Candidates must also be given the opportunity to use past Assessment Papers and to complete mock examinations under timed conditions. This not only assists candidates in their examination preparation but provides them with feedback and to know their individual weaknesses in parts of the Syllabus.

## **Comments on specific questions**

Many candidates at this level produced good Papers and they are to be congratulated. However, it was evident that some candidates had both insufficient practical and underpinning knowledge to answer questions well at this level.

There was some careless work in the scripts. Some questions were not read properly which led to candidates misinterpreting what was required. Parts of questions (often the simpler part of the task) were omitted and either too many or too few points were given in answers. Preparation in examination technique would probably have helped these candidates.

## **Comments on specific papers**

*Paper 5233A*

### **Question 1**

Candidates had been well prepared on health and safety issues in the workplace and gained excellent marks on this question which related to accidents.

### **Question 2**

Although from answers given it was clear that candidates knew the basics of filing systems, they knew little about the purposes of file indexes or the reasons for having a file retention policy.

### **Question 3**

The whole of this question concerned ISDN and highlighted the problem of only parts of the Syllabus being covered. Most candidates were unable to expand ISDN, give ways in which it could be used or name the items that ISDN can transmit quickly.

**Question 4**

Surprisingly candidates found difficulty in giving *four* planning aids and even included telephones and computers in their list.

*Paper 5233B*

**Question 3**

Evidence showed that most candidates had covered this section of the Syllabus. However, in many scripts the answers given appear to have been rote learned. Candidates were required to give the reasons why a reception area is important, the ways to make visitors feel welcome and how the reception area can be made into a comfortable place. Many candidates gave the same responses to all three parts of the question. It was apparent that these candidates were unable to apply their learning to the questions asked.

# INTERPERSONAL BUSINESS SKILLS

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| <b>Paper 5166</b> |
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## 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

### **Standard Level 5166**

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.



# CUSTOMER CARE

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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.

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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.

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.

# ORGANISING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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Paper 5237

## General comments

The overall performance of the candidates in their Assessment Assignments ranged from excellent to 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 that had been used.

A few candidates achieved a Distinction and some a Pass. There were, however, a disappointing number who did not succeed.

Some candidates 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 the changes were made in the Syllabus.

## Comments on the work of candidates

Most of the reports produced were legible and very detailed. However, some candidates only included information on how a meeting *should* be organised. Some reports were in excess of the maximum 1,800 words, largely because of this. Candidates detailed the various aspects that can be used to make a meeting successful. However, there was often very little in the way of specifics detailing what the candidates actually organised, how they did it, when and where, with whom they communicated and how they did so, etc.

Some candidates did not mention 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 that 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.)

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 when next organising a meeting.

Many candidates included lengthy descriptions of the secretarial and chairpersons' roles and procedures and lists of meeting terminology. Although these are not now required, candidates were not penalised for including these in their assignments.

Some assignments were muddled and confused. Candidates appeared to have included 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. (It would be most helpful if the report only could be submitted for assessment.) Occasionally, candidates produced some documentation but did not include a work schedule or action plan.

## Further general comments

A Student Assessment Record (SAR) 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 in the Syllabus is highly recommended.

It is also recommended that candidates discuss with their Tutors the meeting they are able to organise, preferably a small, informal meeting, rather than try to over-stretch themselves by organising a large, formal meeting. Once they have decided the meeting they could organise, 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 that will be required. (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 may choose to work on their own or may wish to work with a fellow candidate 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, chairperson's agendas, transcripts of telephone calls, etc. should be included in the report.

Candidates should consider:

- what type of meeting they will be organising,
- the documentation which would be appropriate for that meeting,
- the time, date and venue for the meeting,
- how they propose to organise the meeting,
- what facilities they have to help them in this task,
- how to ensure everything required is organised – methodical working,
- production of clear documentation,
- what communication methods would be appropriate and also the effect work roles and relationships have on the communication methods they choose,
- 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 thought out the organisation of the meeting and the report from the outset 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 candidate, together with an explanation of the factors that will influence the communications they choose to use,
- 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 report detailing how the candidate organised the meeting should be sent to CIE – a candidate's mini assignments/tasks undertaken during class time are not required.

# INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

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| <b>Paper 5191</b> |
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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.