# OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STANDARD LEVEL

**Paper 8972/5231**

**Text Processing**

## General comments

The candidates' overall performance was varied; some of the work submitted was excellent, with accurate and well-presented work. Some candidates, however, submitted work which was inaccurate and showed very little evidence of proofreading.

Some candidates did not succeed because they failed the Speed Test (Task 1). Candidates are required to key in all the text (to achieve the required speed of 35 wpm) within the error tolerance (maximum of 6 errors allowed) and within the time allowed (5 minutes).

Some candidates were successful in the Speed Test but then incurred too many errors in Tasks 2 to 5.

### ERRORS OCCURRING IN TASKS 2, 3 AND 4

● Errors of agreement were not identified and corrected (such as, "I is" not corrected to "I am" – 5231/A, Task 2).
● Apostrophe errors were not identified and corrected (such, as "companys' head office" not corrected to "company's head office" – 5231/A, Task 4).
● Abbreviations not expanded correctly (such as, "Pk" ["Park"] – 5231/A, Task 4).

### COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC TASKS

**Task 1**

Some candidates completed the task within the error tolerance, but there were others who did not complete all the text within the 5 minutes allowed. Some candidates completed all the text but incurred more than the 6 errors maximum allowed.

**Task 2**

● Today's date was omitted.

**Task 3**

● The inset paragraph was not indented from the left margin the exact measurement instructed: 35 mm from the left margin – 5231/A.
● Underlining of text not carried out as indicated in the draft: "neat and tidy" – 5231/A.

**Task 4**

● The words "Our ref" were omitted.
● Today's date was omitted.
● Envelopes or labels not produced – some candidates simply used a sheet of A4 paper.

**Task 5**

● Many candidates produced excellent documents that were accurately typed and well displayed.

**General Comments**

Many candidates seemed to rely on spellcheckers and grammar checkers as their only means of proofreading.

**Task 1**

Candidates should be advised that they are required to type the text <u>once only</u> and to spend any time remaining proofreading and correcting their work before printing.

The candidates who passed Task 1 (Speed Test) 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 (page 13 of the syllabus refers)

The subject heading should be keyed in as displayed in the draft, for example, <u>Initial Capitals and Underlining</u> 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) – page 10 of the syllabus refers: bulleted point 3, NOTES section.

Errors of agreement may be subject/verb or quantity/noun (page 13 of the syllabus refers).  These will include errors such as, "the director were" ("the director was") and "15 room" ("15 rooms").

**Task 3**

Errors in apostrophes may be those which have been misplaced – e.g. "persons' ability " ("person's ability") or superfluous apostrophes – e.g. "those companies' that" ("those companies that") – page 14 of the syllabus refers.

Page numbers should be inserted on second pages – any style and font size is acceptable – page 14 of the syllabus refers.

**Task 4**

Letters must be produced on letterheaded paper – some candidates used plain A4 paper and a few keyed in the letterheading themselves.  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 – the full style is preferred, e.g. "31 December 2006".

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

Many 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.

**Task 5**

This task was very accurately typed and some excellent documents produced.  Many candidates were very inventive and used various methods of emphasis to great effect.  There were very few keying in errors.

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## General comments

Once again it is pleasing to report that the scripts completed by candidates this year have continued to be of a better standard than in previous years. Most candidates demonstrated sound underpinning knowledge. However, there were still a few candidates who produced answers which indicated insufficient knowledge, and no evidence of applying knowledge which would have been gained through work experience.

It is a continuing worry that some Centres focus on selected aspects of the syllabus resulting in gaps in candidate knowledge and thus some questions were either unsatisfactorily answered or not attempted. Centres should note that efforts are made to ensure that all aspects of the syllabus are covered at least once in a three year period.

It appeared that questions which were not straight knowledge recall questions were received favourably by all levels of candidates who had covered the syllabus.

There are no comments for questions, or parts of a question, which were generally found to have been answered satisfactorily. Most of Papers B and C 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 previous reports and it was pleasing to see the continuing improvement in both presentation and legibility of scripts.

Thank you to Centre Administrators who took note of the administration difficulties which had been encountered in the previous year. There have been no problems, this year, with transposition of the number of the paper that a candidate had completed and the incorrect paper number being entered on the front of the envelopes.

It must be said once again that good examination techniques are being practised 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 proof reading skills or not ticking off a question as it has been answered.

It is important that candidates 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.

Some Centres are still using rote learning 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.

## Further general comments

Candidates were trained well and mostly produced scripts which were of a good standard.

Most unsuccessful candidates were re-entered for Paper B and usually failed this paper as well. The main problems for their failure appeared to be rote learning and an inability to understand the questions asked.

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 to understand the questions or to produce the level of answer needed to gain satisfactory marks.

## Comments on specific papers

### *Paper 5232A*

### Task 1

Candidates were asked to prepare an Agenda and include given items. This was poorly done and showed that some Centres had either not covered this topic or the candidates had had little opportunity to complete Agendas in a practical way.

### Task 4

Candidates were asked to produce a chart from given figures. Many candidates did this well. However, some weaker candidates produced three charts, ignored the instructions, did not use a title or legends, or had the axis the wrong way round.

### *Paper 5232B*

### Task 3

Candidates were asked to produce a form which Team Leaders could use to check on the progress of a task. Some candidates did not produce a form but answered the question in written format. Others did a form and completed it making up information such as 82% progress. Many gave irrelevant headings.

### Task 4

This question asked for reasons why feedback to team members is important. Some candidates either did not understand the question or had not covered the topic. Incorrect answers included reference to before a project begins and personalities of team.

# OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STANDARD LEVEL

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Paper 5233
Office Procedures
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## General comments

The general standard of work in 2006 has continued to improve and Centres should be congratulated.

Similar comments apply as with the Communication and Task Management Examinations in that there is evidence to indicate that only selected areas of the syllabus had been covered by some Centres. Candidates must have underpinning knowledge to ensure full coverage of the syllabus.

Owing to the greater numbers of candidates achieving success when completing Paper A it has not been necessary to use Papers B and C in some of the levels 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.

It must be said that although there is evidence of good work, 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.

Once again it is endorsed that 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.

## Further general comments

Most candidates at this level produced mainly good papers and they are to be congratulated.

However, as in 2005, it was evident that some candidates had both insufficient practical and underpinning knowledge to answer all questions well and there were gaps in some scripts.

Some questions were not read properly which led to candidates misinterpreting what was required. Parts of questions were omitted which may have occurred because certain parts of the syllabus have not been covered by Centres. Mock examinations would have helped to make candidates aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

## Comments on specific papers

*Paper 5233A*

**Task 1**

This question asked for advantages and disadvantages of Reception staff using electronic diaries. The answer often did not relate to Reception staff but gave advantages and disadvantages of the general usage of electronic diaries. Weaker candidates discussed manual diaries.

# OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STANDARD LEVEL

## General comments

Candidates have made a good effort in the layout and presentation of their reports.

Those candidates who included an Assignment Cover Sheet with their submissions were able to check that all the module criteria had been covered. This included evidencing and demonstrating specific objectives in the text of their reports. Candidates using the cover sheets were more likely to be successful in being awarded a 'pass' or higher grade by the examiner. The inclusion of an Assignment Cover Sheet is also valuable to the teacher and examiner in checking that the submitted work is complete in every way.

It is essential that Centres include the Student Assessment Record sheet with all candidates' work when submitting this for marking, in the majority of cases where this had not been done candidates' work was returned. The SAR is very important as it demonstrates specific areas of the module that have been covered by the candidate at the Centre. This provides the evidence that the candidate has achieved each objective consistently and without help.

There have been instances where the reports from a particular Centre were similar in content and layout. This was considered to be acceptable as there was enough evidence in each report to show that individual candidates had submitted their own work.

## Specific Comments

Some candidates were not successful and a number of weaknesses contributed to poor grades. These included:

- A number of objectives had not been demonstrated in the text of the report. The missing objectives could have been identified by the candidate or the Centre if the assignment had been thoroughly checked against the criteria before submitting the work for assessment. This type of check helps to identify gaps in the assignment and shows where the candidate must provide further work or evidence.

- The objectives relating to 'assertiveness' had not been demonstrated or were not adequately covered by the candidate. If this is an issue that relates to the culture of the candidate or the country where the Centre is located, then the candidate should mention this in his or her report.

- Evidence of the candidate chairing a meeting or making a presentation to a group was not always apparent yet these are requirements of the module.

- Where minutes of a meeting were written out by the candidate these did not follow business-like conventions.

- On some occasions self -evaluation was not included as part of the report and in a small number of instances it had been written in the 'third' person. The self -evaluation should be written in the 'first' person e.g. "I found it difficult be firm when I was chairing the meeting but my teacher stepped in and helped me".

- The report was very basic in content and many areas could have been extended, it would have been helpful if the candidate had been more outward looking towards the business community.

● Although most candidates produced a contents page and page numbering to their reports, cross-referencing to the Assignment Cover Sheet was not accurate.

● Reference sources were not always listed as part of the report or quoted in the text. Use of, and reference to, a variety of sources enhances the quality of the work and demonstrates to the examiner that the individual carried out research using a range of sources and methods.

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# OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STANDARD LEVEL

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Paper 8972/5168

Customer Care
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## General comments

Some reports submitted by candidates were very bulky and it was obvious that the assignment guidelines had not been followed.  The recommended number of words for a report is stated in the module booklet. Excessive wordage should be discouraged as it wastes the candidates' own time. It also prevents them from focusing on the core requirements of the assignment, as given in the module booklet. The examiner will continue to grade assignments according to the quality of the work and not the length.

One Centre submitted a batch of candidates' reports which were very similar in content and presentation. Although each report was obviously the work of an individual candidate, the strict model provided by the Centre may have discouraged the development of the assignment by each person and also limited the ability to demonstrate initiative.

It is strongly recommended that Centres use the most recently published module booklet with their candidates as these are upgraded and more 'user friendly' than earlier versions.

One Centre submitted work by candidates who had used watermarked paper throughout their work.  It was difficult to read these reports and hindered a proper layout and presentation of work to the examiner.  On the other hand another Centre submitted a batch of reports that were of very good quality.  These followed a good layout and the work was clearly presented.

Overall, the reports submitted for this module were of very good quality and candidates had made a determined effort with their work.

## Specific Comments

Some candidates were not successful.  The work of these candidates showed a number of weaknesses which included:

- Writing the self-evaluation in the 'third' person when it is more appropriate to write in the 'first'

- Omitting the self-evaluation

- Only minimal use of reference sources, which could have been extended to demonstrate research

- Objectives were not covered or evidenced. In one batch the objective 1.2 'Recognise how customer care operates in different organisations' was omitted

- The contents page and Assignment Cover Sheet numbering did not match page numbering in the report

- Assignment Cover Sheets were not fully completed by candidates and the reports were incomplete

- There was no proper analysis of the results of the survey

# OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STANDARD LEVEL

> **Paper 5237**
>
> **Organising Meetings and Events**

## General comments

The overall performance of the candidates ranged from very good to quite poor. Some candidates were obviously well prepared and correctly organised **a meeting**, as required. They then produced reports detailing how they had organised their meetings and the documentation and methods of communication they had produced and used.

Some candidates did not submit completed Student Assessment Records and/or completed Assignment Cover Sheets. These confirm that the Assignment is the candidate's own work and should indicate that work taken from another source is appropriately referenced and acknowledged. Assignment Cover Sheets have also been designed to enable candidates to check that their work is complete and has covered all the required competence criteria. Both documents should be completed and signed by candidates and teachers.

## Comments on the work of candidates

Most of the reports produced were legible and detailed. However, some candidates only included information on how a meeting **should** be organised and detailed the various aspects that make a meeting successful, but there was often no specific information on what the candidates actually organised, how they did it, when and where, with whom they communicated and how they did so.

Some candidates did not mention the communication methods they used. Copies of letters, emails, agenda, notice of meeting, minutes, chairperson's agenda and transcripts of telephone conversations were submitted by most candidates. There was often no detailed information of what communication methods were used and the factors that influenced their choice. (For example, a need to inform someone urgently of a meeting would most likely 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 or a text message sent to ensure the person receives the information as quickly and efficiently as possible.)

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

Many candidates included lengthy descriptions of the secretarial and chairperson's roles and procedures and lists of meeting terminology. These are not required, but candidates were not penalised for including them in their assignments.

A brief introduction describing the meeting would be very helpful, as it was often difficult to determine what meeting the candidates had actually organised. However, a comprehensive description of the business for which the meeting is being organised is not required.

Some candidates produced a variety of documents but did not include a work schedule or action plan.

**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 teacher. Each candidate must submit a completed SAR with his/her assignment. Assignment Cover Sheets should also be completed and submitted by every candidate.

Candidates and teachers 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, as this will help candidates in the planning and undertaking of their Assignments.

It is also recommended that candidates discuss with their teachers the meeting they are able to organise. Some candidates were too ambitious and attempted to organise a large, complex meeting. They are advised to organise a small, informal meeting if at all possible. Once they have decided the meeting they intend to 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 student or work colleague. They should plan their duties and negotiate the allocation of these duties. However, 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 is essential
- production of clear documentation
- what communication methods would be appropriate and the factors that influenced their choice
- 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 should describe 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 influenced the communications they used
- 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.

# OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STANDARD LEVEL

> **Paper 8972/5191**
>
> **Information and Communications Technology**

## General

The scheme has had a successful year with entries of 8307 marginally below the 8480 in 2004-5. The award was available in English, Spanish and Greek. The total numbers of entries in English were 6530, of which 1460 entries were at Foundation Level, 3987 were at Standard Level and 1083 at Advanced Level. This indicates a significant increase in numbers in the Standard Level entries. The entries in Greek remained static and the entries in Spanish have shown a small increase on the previous year, with a total of 653 entries during this year.

## Standard Level

This level comprised a Core module and five enhancement modules.
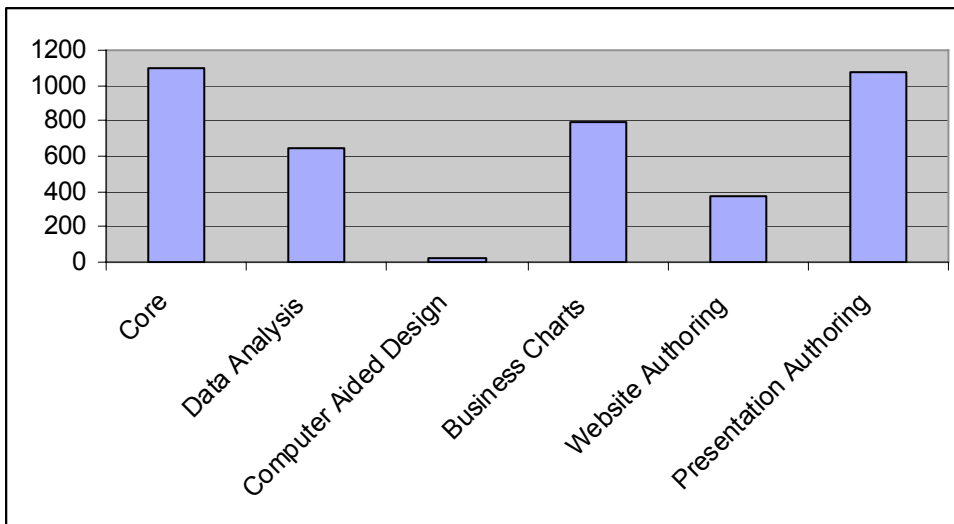


There was an overall improvement in the quality of candidates' entries across all modules this year. Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the subject knowledge and practical skills required in these modules.

The general standard of entries for this module was high, although there were a number of errors which included:

- 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, particularly by sorting only the specified field and therefore failing to maintain the integrity of the data. Candidates who made this error were usually using a spreadsheet package rather than a database. Some candidates confused ascending and descending sorts.
- When the page break has been removed in the second version of the document the line spacing was not maintained.
- Errors in page layout with the failure to set margins or column widths as specified.
- Some candidates could not correctly align text, especially when asked to fully justify the body text of a document.

- 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 resize the imported graphic or to text wrap around this graphic.
- 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.