OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED LEVEL

Paper 8973/5241

Text Processing

General comments

The overall performance of the candidates varied considerably. Some of the work submitted was of a very high standard, with accurate work that was well presented. On the other hand, some candidates submitted scripts which were inaccurate and which showed little, if any, 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 50 wpm) within the error tolerance (maximum of 6 errors allowed) and within the time allowed (5 minutes).

There were some candidates who were successful in the Speed Test but who 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 "two swimming pool" not corrected to "two swimming pools" – 5241/A, Task 3).
- Apostrophe errors were not identified and corrected (such as the superfluous apostrophe in "discounts' on clothing" – 5241/A, Task 2).
- Abbreviations were not expanded correctly (such as "poss" ["possible"] and "necy" ["necessary"] – 5241/A, Task 3).
- Underlining not carried out as indicated in the draft (such as "before the end of this week" – 5241/A, Task 3)
- Various typographical errors such as "you" instead of "your", "form" instead of "from" and "out" instead of "our".

COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC TASKS

Task 1

Although some candidates completed the task within the error tolerance, there were a few instances where candidates had not completed all the text. There were also instances where candidates had completed all the text but they incurred more than the maximum 6 errors allowed.

Task 2

- Enclosure had not been indicated.
- Today's date was omitted.

Task 3

- The left and right margins were not the exact measurement stated in the instruction (such as 35 mm from the left edge of paper and 35 mm from the right edge of paper – 5241/A).
- The inset paragraph was not indented from the left margin the exact measurement instructed (such as 25 mm from the left margin – 5241/A).

Task 4

- The letter was not produced on letterheaded paper.
- The words "Our ref" were omitted.
- Today's date was omitted.
- Subject heading not typed in the style shown in the draft (such as "NEW LEISURE CENTRE" instead of "New Leisure Centre" – 5241/A.
- Two extra copies were not submitted.
- Candidates who did produce the two extra copies did not always ensure the name of the person receiving one of the extra copies appeared on **both** extra copies.
- Some candidates who correctly produced the extra copies did not indicate the routing.

Task 5

- Many candidates produced excellent tables which were very accurate and well displayed.

General Comments

Many candidates seemed to rely on spellcheckers and grammar checkers as their only means of proofreading. There were errors such as "you"/"your" and "form"/"from", which the spellchecker would **not** identify as incorrect.

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.

Task 2

Today's date is required, as is normal business practice. Omission of the date incurs 3 penalty errors (page 13 of the Advanced 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. This assesses candidates' 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 of the NOTES section.

Errors of agreement may be subject/verb or quantity/noun (page 13 of the syllabus refers). These will include more obvious errors such as "3 page" ("3 pages") but also included will be less obvious examples such as "A range of leaflets are enclosed" ("A range of leaflets is enclosed").

Enclosure(s) should be indicated. Although the usual business convention is to use *Enc* for one enclosure and *Encs* for more than one, any indication will be accepted in the Assessment.

Task 3

The left and right margins should be changed from the default margins set by the word processor (usually 2.5 cm or 2.54 cm) to the measurements given in the draft (such as 35 mm – 5241/A). The measured space between the text and the left edge of the paper and the text and the right edge of the paper should each have measured <u>exactly</u> 35 mm (3.5 cm). Many candidates seem to have added the 3.5 cm (35 mm) measurement to the default margins, resulting in very wide margins and a very short line length.

Page numbers should be inserted on continuation sheets – any style and font size is acceptable – Page 15 of the syllabus refers.

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 are being assessed on their ability to produce letters in a realistic manner, as would be required in business.

Today's date is required and the full style is preferred, e.g. "31 December 2006".

The Special Mark (such as "URGENT" – 5241/A) should be typed exactly as shown in the draft, including capitalisation.

Two extra copies of the letter are required. The name of the person who is to receive one of these copies should be typed on **both** the extra copies. This ensures that the file copy shows all those people who received the letter.

Routing of the extra copies should also be carried out. Any indication of routing may be used, e.g. a tick, underlining, highlighting, etc.

Task 5

The table was accurately typed and well displayed by the majority of candidates. Lines of ruling may be included if desired.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED LEVEL

> **Paper 5242**
>
> **Communication and Task Management**

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.

The work presented by many advanced candidates was of a very high standard with answers keyed-in and organised in a way which would be expected of candidates taking a high level examination.

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.

<u>Further general comments</u>

The standard at this level has continued to improve.

Candidates had been trained well and it was obvious that they had relevant work experience which led to success and they should be congratulated. There was some evidence of rote learning and parts of the syllabus which had not been covered.

As in the Standard level there were several instances of candidates being entered for a level which was beyond their ability and they were unable to apply their limited theoretical knowledge to given situations.

<u>Comments on specific papers</u>

Paper 5242 A

Task 4

Candidates were asked to use a given pie chart and present this information in another form of chart. Some candidates omitted this part of the question whilst others did not give their chart a title and had incorrect figures in the chart.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED LEVEL

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Paper 5243
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

There were some very good scripts this year.

It is expected at this level that candidates will have the ability and knowledge to consider the question carefully, plan an answer which is well constructed, and present it in a way which is legible and easy to understand. The majority of candidates were able to do this indicating that they were well prepared for this high level examination.

Centres should note that over a period of time the whole syllabus will be tested. Therefore, Centres should not take a chance and must cover the full syllabus. Candidates should have completed several mock examinations to give them the opportunity to become proficient in interpreting data and answering questions.

Comments on specific papers

Paper 5243A

Task 1

It was surprising that at this level some candidates were unable to put together an Agenda in the correct order.

Some candidates gained no marks for the second part of this question. The section asked for a way in which the agenda for the Chairperson would differ from that of committee members. This was a definite indication that some Centres are only selecting parts of the syllabus to cover with their candidates.

The final part of the question in which candidates were asked to explain the role of the Chairperson during the meeting gave irrelevant points such as ''know what the meeting was about''.

Task 2

Weaker candidates misinterpreted this question giving details of planning a trip rather than four sources of research which could help in the planning of a trip.

Task 4

Weaker candidates gained few marks for this question which, again, indicated that questionnaires was a part of the syllabus which had been poorly covered. Some candidates discussed what Human Resources Department covered and few could explain who might analyse the completed questionnaires.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED LEVEL

> **Paper 8973/5176**
>
> **Interpersonal Business Skills**

General comments

It is very important to read and understand the requirements of each module; these are set out in the various booklets. Some candidates submitted interesting reports on the subject of interpersonal business skills but failed to evidence the objectives or competence criteria in the report itself.

It is appropriate that candidates actually carry out specific tasks and write up the outcome of the task as evidence or provide an analysis what happened. To act only as a witness or observer, especially to a presentation or investigation does not meet the requirements of the assessment. In one instance a case study was used to complete the assignment. This was not appropriate because the candidate was unable to comment on a real life survey or subsequently make a presentation to a group.

The section in the module booklet entitled 'Assignment Guidelines' should always be followed to ensure all aspects of the subject area are covered and that the report is presented to the Examiner in the proper format. A landscape style of presentation was seen from one Centre and this is not appropriate to this module.

Specific Comments

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

- The candidate failed to include a section on self-evaluation.

- No Assignment Cover Sheet used.

- The Assignment Cover Sheet used was not complete.

- Items included in the Appendices were not titled.

- Assertiveness was weak in the report and where this is a cultural issue then this should be stated alongside a comment from the candidate that the value of assertiveness in the business world is understood.

- Some objectives had not been demonstrated in the report.

- Apparently the candidate had not made a presentation to a group.

- Praise and criticism were not mentioned.

- There were no reference sources quoted by the candidate.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED LEVEL

| Paper 8973/5178 |
| Customer Care |

General comments

A good number of reports submitted by various Centres were of very good quality but others were not so well laid out and presented for marking. Some reports contained errors in the text, which had been identified by the candidates but not corrected before submitting the work.

Student Assessment Record sheets and Assignment Cover Sheets had, on occasions, been omitted and sometimes not fully completed by the teacher/candidate. This is important because it indicates what the candidate has achieved during the course and provides a link to the evidence detailed in the report.

Specific Comments

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

- The candidate did not provide a proper self-evaluation of the strengths and weakness in carrying out the investigation or making a presentation.

- Student Assessment Record sheets and Assignment Cover Sheets were not used or in some cases not complete.

- Errors had been left in the text of the report; these should have been identified and corrected before submitting the work for marking.

BUSINESS ADVANCED LEVEL

> **Paper 8929/5247**
>
> **Organising Meetings and Events**

General comments

The candidates' overall performance ranged from excellent to quite poor. Some candidates were well prepared and correctly organised **an event**, as required.

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 (pages 64 to 68 of the Advanced Syllabus refer).

COMMENTS ON THE WORK OF CANDIDATES

Most of the candidates produced reports that were legible and detailed. Teachers should note, however, that a description of best practice is not sufficient evidence for success in the Assignment.

Candidates often did not give specific information on what they actually organised, how they did it, when and where, with whom they communicated and how they did so. Various documents had been produced, but candidates' organising skills were not always apparent. Candidates, especially at the Advanced Level, should be using monitoring aids efficiently, for example, action plans, schedules and checklists. One of these aids should then be used and copies submitted as part of the candidates' reports, as clear evidence of the organisation process followed by candidates.

Some candidates mentioned the communication methods they used, but very few included the reasons they chose these particular methods. Copies of letters, emails, agendas, notices of meetings, minutes etc (where meetings were held as part of the organisation of the event), invitations, venue brochures, name cards, banners, notices and transcripts of face-to-face and telephone conversations were often submitted. However, no specific detail had been given of what communication methods were used and the factors that influenced their choice. (For example, an email written to a colleague would use an informal approach and style of writing, whilst an email to a Managing Director would be more formal and take account of that person's role in the organisation.) Competence Criteria 1.1 (page 59 of the syllabus) and 2.1 (page 61) refer.

The selection and use of effective monitoring aids, such as checklists, diaries, work schedules, etc as a means of effective and efficient event planning should also have been highlighted. Candidates are required to assess the planning, organising and monitoring methods they actually used (Competence Criterion 2.2, page 61 of the syllabus refers). They should then state whether or not these monitoring aids were successful and what they would do differently when they organise their next event.

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

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

GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates and teachers are advised to read the Assignment Guidelines given on pages 69 and 70 of the syllabus very carefully. The step-by-step approach included in the Introduction on page 69 is highly recommended, as this will help candidates to plan and carry out their assignments.

It is also recommended that candidates discuss with their teachers the event they are able to organise. Some candidates have been rather ambitious and would be better advised to organise a **small** event. Once they have decided the actual event that they intend to organise, they should then work out how this could be done. Candidates should write a plan of how they intend to carry out the various tasks that will be required. They should then discuss the plan with their teachers. Centres should note that candidates who cannot organise an actual event may organise a simulated event, but all the assessment requirements listed in the syllabus must still be met.

Each candidate must produce evidence of his/her own planning and work schedule. Copies of documentation, such as invitations, agendas and minutes of meetings (if appropriate), emails, notes, short reports, transcripts of telephone calls and face-to-face conversations, publicity for the event, etc should be included in the report. Evidence can include video and/or tape cassette material, but this should be authenticated by a teacher's observation statement (page 70 of the syllabus refers).

Candidates should consider:

1. what type of event they can organise
2. the documentation which would be appropriate for the event
3. the time, date and venue for the event
4. how they propose to organise the event
5. what facilities they have to help them
6. how to ensure everything necessary is organised – methodical working is crucial
7. production of documentation that is complete and clear
8. what communication methods would be appropriate and also the effect work roles and relationships will have on the communication methods they choose
9. timescales involved.

The production of the report should be considered right from the start of planning, not left to the last minute. Candidates who made notes and who thought out the organisation of the event 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 event.
● 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 and transcripts of telephone and face-to-face conversations.
● A conclusion on the success of the event.

# BUSINESS ADVANCED LEVEL

> **Paper 8929/5201**
>
> **Information and Communications Technology and Core**

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.

Advanced Level

This level comprised a Core module and five enhancement modules.
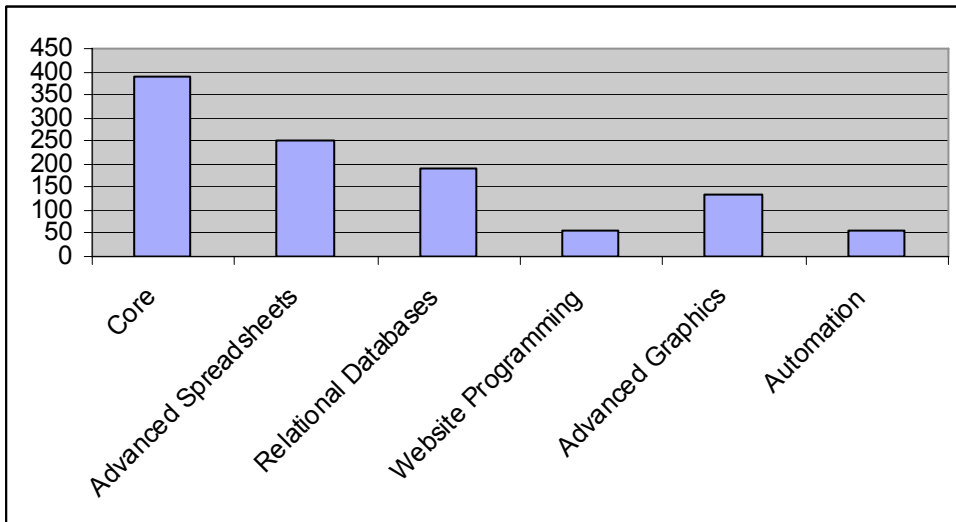
There overall pass rate for these modules was slightly improved on those from last year.

This module continues to be popular. The most common errors were:

- The failure to submit all the required printouts, particularly the two different copies of the document production section. A significant number of candidates completed and printed the final version of the document but failed to submit the intermediate printout of their work.
- Errors in searching and sorting the database extract (particularly in maintaining the data integrity).
- 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.
- Errors inserting new text into a numbered list and renumbering as specified in the question paper.