

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED LEVEL

Paper 8973/5241

Text Processing

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. Unfortunately, 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 “new brochure show” not corrected to “new brochure shows” – 5241/A, Task 2).
- Apostrophe errors were not identified and corrected (such as the superfluous apostrophe in “copies’ of the old brochure” – 5241/A, Task 2).
- Abbreviations were not expanded correctly (such as “info” (“information”) and “snclly” (“sincerely”) – 5241/A, Task 4).
- Underlining not carried out as indicated in the draft (such as “We looked at the workplace causes only.” – 5241/A, Task 3)

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.

COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC TASKS

Task 1

Some 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

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

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 letter headed 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 “MANAGING STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE” instead of “Managing Stress in the Workplace” – 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.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED LEVEL

Paper 8973/5242

Communication and Task Management

General comments

The completion of examination papers has continued to improve once again with the majority of scripts achieving a very good standard. There were still a few answers which indicated insufficient knowledge, and gave no evidence of applying knowledge which would have been gained through work experience.

Some Centres are still focusing 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 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 that presentation and legibility of scripts continues to improve.

Centre Administrators who took note of the administration difficulties which had been encountered in previous years made the problem of identifying papers easy. 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.

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 proofreading skills or not ticking off a question as it has been answered.

The good results being achieved are probably due to more candidates being 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.

There is evidence to indicate that some Centres are still using rote learning for selected parts of the syllabus. Whilst this is sometimes useful, candidates often find it difficult to apply that knowledge to questions being asked especially when the task set is given a scenario in which the candidate needs to apply their knowledge.

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Paper 8973/5243

Office Procedures

General comments

There has been a marked improvement in the standard of work in 2007. Congratulations to Centres and candidates.

The comments made in the Communication and Task Management Examinations also apply to the Office Procedures Examination in that there is evidence to indicate that only selected areas of the syllabus had been covered by a minority of Centres. Candidates need underpinning knowledge to ensure full coverage of the syllabus.

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

There is evidence of excellent work by some candidates, this would indicate guidance on how to read examination questions and how to ensure that every part of the question has been attempted. However, there were still several candidates who omitted whole or parts of questions, or, did not give the requested number of points.

All candidates should 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.

BUSINESS ADVANCED LEVEL AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED LEVEL

Paper 8973/5176
Interpersonal Business Skills

General comments

The quality of the assignments submitted reflected the 'Advanced level' of this module. Teacher and candidate commitment was apparent and a number of higher grades were awarded throughout the year.

The layout and presentation of work was very good and the evidence of competence and knowledge of the objectives was obvious.

Candidates made good use of reference sources. A discussion on how these fitted in with the research undertaken and the assignment content was apparent.

Specific Comments

Some weaknesses in candidates' assignments were identified as follows.

- 'Assertiveness' was mentioned by most candidates but the definition of this objective and how the concept was applied to the research undertaken, was weak.
- Poor evidence that a presentation had been made to the Reference Group.
- Other weaknesses - No notes or a list of materials used for the presentation available, roles of participants not listed and no evidence that a group meeting had taken place.

BUSINESS ADVANCED LEVEL AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED LEVEL

Paper 8973/5178

Customer Care

General comments

The majority of assignments submitted were of good quality and were set out in a business-like style and well presented for marking. The use of graphics was helpful in describing the research carried out and gave a clear indication of the results obtained.

Reference sources appeared in two forms, either as an appendix item entitled 'bibliography' or quoted in the text of the assignment. In the latter case, where the candidate discussed the usefulness and appropriateness of reference sources, this usually led to a higher grade.

Centres should always refer to the syllabus for the year of examination when planning courses and helping candidates to prepare their assignments prior to submission. Centres are encouraged to use the most recent version of the syllabus since earlier editions may not include changes which have been made to the mode of assessment or content.

The Principal Examiner strongly recommends the use of Assignment Cover Sheets, as they have benefits for the candidate, teacher and Examiner. Assignments from Centres using the cover sheets are usually more successful.

The Assignment Cover Sheet for Candidates has been developed to help teachers and their candidates to review assignments **before** they are submitted for assessment by a CIE Examiner. Teachers and candidates should refer to the Assessment Guidelines before completing these forms or submitting assignments. A Student Assessment Record (SAR) should still be completed and submitted with the assignment.

There should be regular review sessions between teachers and candidates – the cover sheets can help with this process.

The Assignment Cover Sheets can be used:

- By the teacher to alert candidates to what they should include in their assignments
- By the teacher as a **checklist** of tasks and **competence criteria** which must be available in an assignment to meet the pass criteria
- By the candidate to identify what tasks they will need to undertake and how the assignment should be presented
- By the candidate to check that the work they are about to submit contains all the relevant tasks and competence criteria
- By both the candidate and the teacher to **identify gaps**, missing competence criteria or insufficient coverage of tasks before work is officially submitted i.e. to check that all the relevant module requirements are being met
- By both the candidate and the teacher to develop an **action plan** to remedy any problems which have been identified

- As a record to show coverage of the competence criteria within the assignment i.e. page numbers and comments
- As a final check before submission of the SAR
- As an aid to the Examiner when marking the assignments, through a clear indication of coverage and content

Centres should only submit candidates' work if they feel it meets all of the requirements of the scheme and is complete. SAR sheets must be fully completed and signed by the teacher before submitting work to be examined. Care must be taken in completing the list of names of candidates being put forward, together with their assignments.

Specific Comments

Some weaknesses included the following.

- No Student Assessment Record sheets (SAR) used. This is mandatory and all Centres are expected to attach these completed sheets to the candidates' work. Work is returned to Centres for this omission to be corrected.
- Some candidates have not demonstrated the competence criteria (objectives) fully in their assignments; this is an essential part of all modules and detailed guidance given in the module booklet should be followed. It is important to link these objectives and the research undertaken in the assignment. All objectives must be evidenced in the text of the assignments. These are listed in the syllabus booklet under 'Criteria for Assessment'.
- It is recommended that all candidates submit a completed Assignment Cover Sheet with their work. This provides the teacher, candidate and Examiner with evidence that the work is complete. Some candidates have submitted incomplete Assignment Cover Sheets while others included a numbering system that did not match up with the assignment page numbering. Candidates must ensure that the numbering given on the cover sheet, and on the contents page, matches the work in the assignment.
- Some reports were not submitted in a business-like format. It is essential that assignments are well presented and that reports follow basic standard business conventions. Good introductions and conclusions are to be encouraged. Contents pages which list page numbers help the candidate, teacher and Examiner.
- Two weaknesses often identified are the candidates' self evaluation and failure to quote reference sources in the text. However, it is acceptable for a reference source to be implied in the candidates' work, provided the assignment meets the other criteria.
- Other weaknesses included the following: no reference sources at all; no self-evaluation section; assignment not written in the 'first' person; serious errors in the text of the assignment.

BUSINESS ADVANCED LEVEL AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED LEVEL

Paper 8973/5247

Organising Meetings and Events

The candidates' overall performance was very good. Candidates were well prepared and correctly organised an event, as required. They produced reports detailing how they had organised their events and the documentation and methods of communication they had produced and used.

Centres are reminded that completed Student Assessment Records and Assignment Cover Sheets must be submitted with the candidates' work. These confirm that each 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. The documentation produced was of a high standard. 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 submitted.

The selection and use of effective monitoring aids such as checklists, diaries, work schedules, etc. as a means of effective and efficient event planning was fully described.

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

BUSINESS ADVANCED LEVEL AND ICT ADVANCED LEVEL

Paper 5201

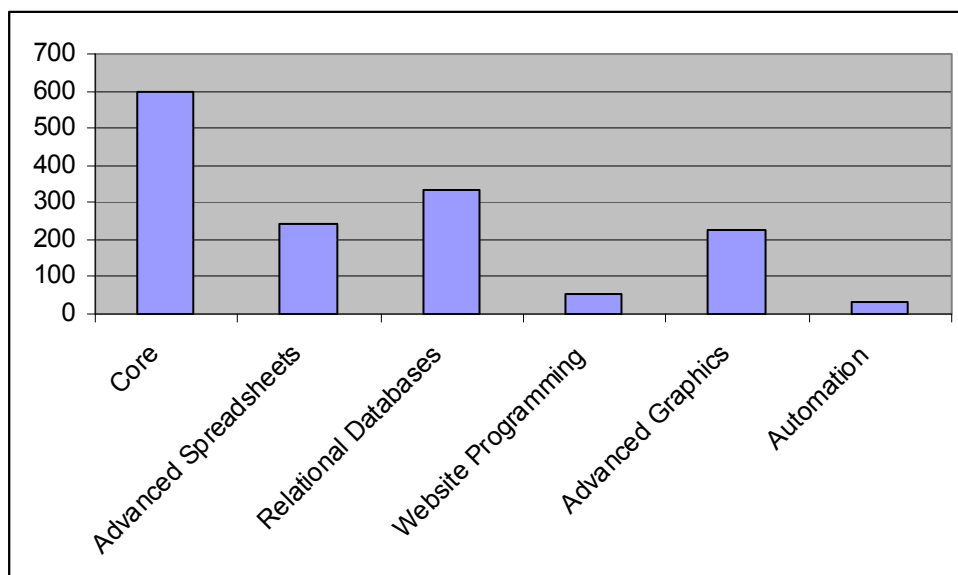
Communication, Data Management, Systems Management

General

The had 7509 English entries and 355 in Spanish. The total numbers of entries at each level in English were 1875 entries at Foundation Level, 4147 were at Standard Level and 1487 at Advanced Level. This indicates a 28% increase in Foundation entries, 4% increase in standard level entries and 36% increase in advanced entries. Spanish entries declined significantly from the previous year.

Advanced Level

This level comprised a core module and five enhancement modules.



There overall pass rate for these modules was very similar to last year's rate.

5201 Advanced Core

This module continues to be popular with a 53% increase in entries from last year. 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.
- 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 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.
- Errors inserting new text into a numbered list and renumbering as specified in the question paper.