



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2006

COMMUNICATION SKILLS Certificate in Marketing Skills

General Comments

At each exam sitting there is a significant percentage of candidates who let valuable marks – those marks that lie between a pass and a fail grade – slip through their fingers because they do not apply the information that they have learned sufficiently well to the exam question they are addressing. In the May 2006 *Communications Skills* paper there was a good deal of sloppiness in terms of setting out answers, such as failing to start answers to new questions on a new page, or failing to clearly mark questions so that the examiner had to thumb through scripts trying to decipher which answers belonged to which questions.

Even if you think you have prepared less than well for an exam, it is important to make sure that on the day you do as well as you possibly can with the information you have. Check all diagrams to ensure that they are properly labelled. Spend plenty of time marshalling your thoughts before you begin to answer the question. Don't just produce lists, develop your points fully and support your answer with examples. Leave space at the end of each question so that if you want to add another point, you have the room to do so. But most important of all, before you start, make sure you are preparing the answer to the question in the exam paper. Even while you are writing your answer, check the question once more to ensure that you are tailoring your answer to the context of the question. Some questions have a more practical orientation than others. The answers should refer to the specific example given in the question.

Question 1: Case Study – Fresco

An interesting mini-case study on poor customer service practice provided plenty of material for students to look at the problem from the point of view of both the individual performer and the company's inadequate procedures. Students were required to analyse the behaviour of Tom Frost who worked on the Customer Service desk of a supermarket. Understandably, students found few strengths in the company representative's behaviour but argued that the company also bore responsibility for his poor performance, given the lack of training and proper procedures. A number of students mentioned the fact that company's should regard complaints as a 'gift' and that for the customer, making a complaint is a key 'moment of truth'.

The second part of the case study required the candidate to recommend a number of techniques to help Tom improve his listening skills. The better answers referred to the need to learn empathic listening skills.

Overall, students provided very interesting and practical responses to the case study.

Question 2

A question on a company's stakeholders, that is the individuals and organizations with which an organization must communicate and have good relations, provided some excellent answers. Most candidates were able to provide a good diagram showing the various organizations with which they communicate, including customers, financial institutions, the general public and suppliers. The very good answers also went on to show how their own companies communicate with these different organizations. They were clearly able to demonstrate that each stakeholder required a slightly different communications strategy.

Question 3

It was clear from this question that most students had prepared very thoroughly for the exam. The majority of candidates were able to outline the main steps in a communications campaign.

Question 4

Students were asked to suggest why it is important to recognize different patterns of behaviour in both ourselves and in other people. While most people were able to discuss their responses to, for example, aggressive behaviour, few students considered how their own communications style can affect other people.

Question 5

A question on presentation skills was not as well answered as the examiner had hoped. Candidates were asked what issues, other than the presentation content, a presenter should consider when preparing a presentation. While most students mentioned the audience as being important, more detail should have been provided on audience needs and expectations. Few referred to the importance of having a clear objective with regarding to influencing the audience's opinions or behaviour. Again, while most referred to the importance of the environment in which the presentation would be made and the visual aids that should be used, these points were not developed sufficiently to show the examiner that the exam candidate fully understood how to prepare a presentation.