



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2007

COMMUNICATION SKILLS Certificate in Marketing Skills

General Comments

The Examiner is pleased to note that many of the candidates who sat the August Paper 2007 produced papers of a good standard. In particular, questions that had a practical aspect to them, such as the case study, were answered with an encouraging blend of practicality combined with knowledge of best practice in marketing. Often students taking higher level exams are unable to combine common sense and best practice with the same level of success. Many students who elect to take this subject are already working in a commercial environment and are able to bring their own personal experience to bear on the paper.

Candidates' exam technique was also of a good standard. Students applied their knowledge to the questions asked and provided relevant examples from their own experience. There was very little evidence of waffle. However, on the negative side, some answers were simply too brief. The issue here is not what the candidate knows but rather how much effort he or she is prepared to put in to writing a full exam script. Answers of less than a page in length are insufficient for a this level of qualification.

In general, those who answered questions using an essay style format were less succinct. By contrast, those using a well-structured format with subheadings and supporting examples and diagrams, where relevant, achieved a higher mark. As in other years in this subject area, many of the scripts were of a standard one would normally encounter among students taking exams at a more advanced level in marketing.

Question 1: Case Study – Café Kairo

The case study carried 50% of the marks and was based on customer service procedures at a cafe. The challenge for Café Kairo was to maintain a high level of customer service, despite significant staff turnover. This is a problem facing many organizations in the service sector. The impact of poor service for this café was likely to be a loss of regular customers. The first question asked students to identify the main points to be covered in an induction programme for new staff. The second question examined what customer service procedures for dealing with a customer complaint should be put in place.

The better candidates were able to identify the correct steps in dealing with complaints and comment on how deviations from those standards could have an impact on customer loyalty. Weaker answers failed to put any structure on their suggestions and gave personal opinion rather than citing customer complaints procedures as outlined in their programme materials.

Question 2

A question on the 'Moments of Truth' was, in general, well answered. Most people were able to give a definition or description of what is meant by the term. Candidates were also asked to describe a positive and negative Moment of Truth. It is important when handling this type of question to avoid a 'rant'. In other words, analyse the customer service experience and point out why it is positive or negative but do avoid unburdening too much emotion here. This is not what the Examiner is seeking.

Question 3

A question on the Communications Process Model produced mixed results. Ideally, this answer should have been supported by an illustration of the Communications Process Model. This helps the candidate to show the examiner that he or she fully understands how the model works. Some students chose to evaluate the Clio advertisement from their course material. There were some very good examples also of well known advertisements or advertisements from their own organizations. Most students were also able to explain how messages are encoded so that they are successfully transmitted and decoded by the relevant advertising audience.

Question 4

While many students understood the basic steps in the preparation, attendance and follow-up to a meeting, few dealt with the issue of the meeting content itself. Given that the topic for this exam is communication, clearly the issue of meetings as ways of communicating and problem solving needed to be addressed. Most answers did not deal with the issue of having clear objectives.

Question 5

As in question 4, some answers focused too much on issues such as booking rooms and other 'admin' type tasks, while the more important issue of planning the presentation itself was given too little attention.