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Cambridge Career Awards in Business - Standard

BUSINESS ORGANISATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Paper 5161

General comments

Whilst the enrolment for the October paper was not large, the results were very encouraging which ought to reflect the growing familiarity and confidence with this award. The tasks covered all the assessment objectives of the syllabus and were related to the case study. It is this latter point that needs to be emphasised because so many candidates, who are capable of excellent answers, overlooked the necessity of producing their responses in the context of the case study, or else what was the point of it?

Examination technique always seems to require attention. It is the responsibility of Tutors to ensure that their candidates appreciate the need to:

- read the examination paper's instructions very carefully
- ensure that they fully understand what the Examiner wants them to do (candidates are now given 15 minutes' reading time in which to do this)
- lay out their responses cleanly and clearly (papers are still submitted in which it is difficult to discern the ending of one answer and the beginning of another)
- acknowledge that some tasks are worth more marks than others and answer accordingly
- manage the examination time sensibly

Candidates should also assume that the Examiner needs to be informed. They should not expect the Examiner to read their minds and assess what they think the answer means.

The paper was designed around a number of small tasks i.e. 5 at 3 marks, 11 at 5 marks, and 3 at 10 marks each. The object was to encourage the demonstration of general business knowledge rather than very detailed answers. Clearly the 10 mark tasks required more attention than the others but candidates generally failed to use the allocation of marks to help them decide on the depth of answers required.

It was acknowledged that the candidates were, for the most part, answering an examination paper in a second language and the quality of that language was not taken into account. If a poorly expressed response made the point looked for in the marking scheme, then the candidate was awarded the appropriate marks. However, there appears to be an underlying trend of improvement in terms of the response to this paper and hopefully that will continue.

Comments on specific questions

Task 1

(i)-(v) This task, with its five components, should have offered candidates the chance to score quite well as each term ought to have been familiar. The terms all appeared in the case study and were line referenced so a candidate had only to read them in context to make their meaning clear. This was a useful 'starter' task. To earn 3 marks for each item, a candidate was required to offer one or two very well expressed sentences which clearly defined the term. It is not enough, for example, just to say that a micro-business is a small enterprise: the definition should include more details such as the fact that it comprises not more than ten employees. **Item (iii)** Part-time employees presented a problem for many candidates since they confused them with casual workers. Part-timers can be on the permanent staff and would receive the same benefits pro rata as the full-timers. Candidates really ought to score at least 10 marks out of the 15 allocated to this task.

Task 2

(a) This task asked the candidates to *list* three specific features of a partnership. The identity of three appropriate features would have been sufficient to earn a ready 5 marks. Most candidates chose to offer an explanation of each feature which tended to be helpful in making the assessment as some features were badly identified e.g. saying that a partnership must have a minimum of two partners is not incorrect but then so has a private limited company. That point must also say that normally there is a maximum of 20 partners (except for certain professional situations like bankers and accountants).

(b) The Deed of Partnership (Partnership Agreement) was reasonably well defined although often it was not related to Jagwant's business situation and how he might benefit from having one. However, a good and clear definition was awarded full marks (5).

(c) This task provided some disappointment as the difference between secondary and tertiary production was clearly not appreciated. The candidate was required to identify the difference. Secondary production proved easy but the tertiary eluded most; some brief explanation referring to sales and advertising would have ensured 4 or 5 marks.

Task 3

(i) The explanation of a business structure was allocated 5 marks so a detailed answer was not required but a candidate needed to demonstrate a knowledge of it. The point to be made was that it reflects the way in which a business is organised, that it defines the relationship between different departments (or divisions, or sections) and people. Mostly it was reasonably well attempted indicating an awareness of basic business structure.

(ii) This required candidates to express an understanding of the case study and to interpret Jagwant's claim that he does not need a business structure. The clues to the answer, like all the tasks, were to be found in the case study. Candidates tended to appreciate the situation very well and suggested that Jagwant ran only a small business in which he knew everyone, that everyone was responsible and knew what needed doing.

Task 4

(a)(i) Flexitime was well defined and understood although some candidates were under the impression that employees could work hours entirely at their convenience. A company cannot run efficiently if it does not know when staff are going to be available. A company must insist on certain core hours being worked.

(ii) Candidates tended to do quite well with this task and readily identified the advantages to employees of being able to make, for example, dental appointments without losing working time, (and possibly pay).

(b)(i) Candidates were mostly aware of the responsibilities of partners towards one another identifying loyalty, cooperation, efficiency, commitment and honesty. Most signalled honesty and loyalty as the most important. Candidates scored well with this task.

(ii) Equally, there was clear understanding of what the employees could expect from the firm. There is a list in the syllabus but candidates were expected to identify those which were relevant to Jagwant's firm e.g. training on the job, fair wages, safe working environment. In the main this was well answered.

Task 5

(a) A task very similar to this will be asked at every sitting of this paper so it is advisable to ensure that candidates are fully aware of the PEST issues, not just what they are but how they might affect a firm. Generally, candidates regard the PEST issues in a negative way e.g. if interest rates are identified, they are always seen as problematic without regard to the fact they might be low thus benefiting a business. Success in this type of task calls upon a candidate's analytical and evaluative skills. In this paper, candidates were directed to describe the business (or trade) cycle and the distribution of income.

A number understood the business cycle and some even offered a graph depicting the movement from boom to slump and then recovery but there were those who considered it was to do with the life span of a product i.e. a marketing notion. The distribution of income was not well appreciated; very few were able to point out how income might be spread among people, how it might be affected by taxation and so influencing the amount of disposable income (which, in turn, dictates the ability to buy Jagwant's jigsaws). It was acknowledged that both terms are substantial but candidates needed only to appreciate them in general terms. This could have been better answered.

(b)(i) Jagwant's business prospers in a side street and candidates were asked to suggest why that was so. They did not seem to understand that the location was not really so important for the firm because of the high level of postal sales – two-thirds of the business was by mail order. The remaining third was local business. The point to make was that Jagwant's firm was a specialist business so there was no competition and people wanting a custom-made jigsaw would walk down a side street for it. Issues raised like easy parking were not awarded unless coupled with more relevant ideas.

(ii) This and **(i)** above are linked. Going into the new complex would raise Jagwant's costs without the guarantee that business would increase by at least the same amount. If they were able to enhance sales then they may have to take on staff in order to cope with those additional sales and that may not result in an improved net profit. A basic appreciation of location considerations was required.

Task 6

(a) This was quite an easy task since it meant applying the 4Ps to the jigsaw business. Each one of the Ps needed to be considered in terms of the case study and then explained. All the points were covered in the case and it only required the candidates to recognise and discuss them. 10 marks were available for a well-written and considered application of the 4Ps to Jagwant's business.

(b) This task provided perhaps more of challenge than **(a)** above. Candidates needed to demonstrate their appreciation of a customer relations policy and the major point that customers are the lifeblood of the business. The aim of the firm is customer satisfaction resulting in customer loyalty and repeat business.

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Paper 5162

General comments

Once again, in a number of Centres, the pass rate for this paper was very disappointing. There were a number of general issues, which seemed to reoccur within most Centres.

The failures were mainly due to the fact that candidates had problems with the following points:

Misinterpretation of question requirements

This was very evident in a number of questions. **Question 3 (c)** asked for the explanation of the importance of both verbal and non-verbal communication and the answers should have included both areas. However, a number of candidates seemed to answer the question including only verbal or non-verbal communication but not both. Thus marks were lost.

Reluctance to comply with the question requirements

Many candidates chose to ignore exactly what was required in many questions and generally wrote about the key subject of the question. This was mostly evident in **Question 4 (a)** which required the candidates to describe the type of interview structure required. The majority of answers did not describe the type of interview structure and tended to ramble about interviews in general thus these types of answers lost marks.

Format and presentation of material

Candidates should remember that this subject is about effective business communications, therefore, they should ensure that they present their answers using an appropriate format. Many candidates demonstrated very poor writing skills and their work was very difficult to read. A number of candidates in a couple of Centres put their answer pages together in the wrong order, without displaying the numbers of the questions being answered which made the exam papers very difficult to mark.

Poor time management

This is a problem in some Centres. Tutors should try to ensure that their candidates have an opportunity to sit a mock examination prior to the actual examination. In some cases, there were some reasonable answers for **Question 1** and **Question 2** and then very brief ones for the rest of the paper, which clearly indicated a lack of time. In general, this does seem to have improved from the previous years, but still many candidates do not leave themselves enough time to answer the final **Question 5**. There will always be five compulsory questions on this paper and thus candidates should be able to allocate their time accordingly.

Syllabus problems

- Organisational charts
- Letter layout and tone
- Group dynamics
- Recruitment interview structures

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) This question required candidates to state the effectiveness of using types of communications:

(i) *Use of email to customers*. The answer should have included explanation of email as a quick method of communication, 24/7 world-wide access, easy to check if it is received, can attach vouchers etc, one-way method but easier for customers to respond, can keep electronic copy, can be cost-effective. However, impersonal, not all customers have email facility, may not have the email addresses. Most answers were not full enough for the 3 marks available.

(ii) *Telephone call.* Two-way method, can tailor the message to each individual complaint and get immediate feedback to ascertain what the customer requires to remedy the complaint. However, not able to keep a copy easily unless transcripts taken, lengthy process, may be difficult to get hold of the customer if only home or work number given, cannot immediately send vouchers etc with this type of communication. Again, most answers were very brief here.

(b) The second part of the question required candidates to identify and justify the most appropriate method of communication to tell the staff about the levels of customer complaints. The answer should have included: seminars; team meetings; staff interviews. The answers should have been justified also – e.g. the need to use internal two-way method of communication to try to find out problems, to get feedback, need to ensure that staff are not alienated by the communication. Again, many answers here were very basic and not fully justified or explained for the 6 marks available.

(c) This part of the question required candidates to list two reasons for Essam to use appropriate methods of communication for internal and external communications. The answers should have included therefore, both internal and external reasons.

Internal communications reasons: necessary for a business to operate successfully at all levels; need to consider the individuals within the organisation and consider appropriate methods, i.e. Directors, shop floor, admin staff etc; need to consider the immediacy of the communication; need to consider the importance of the communication i.e. disciplinary interview, notice about canteen opening times; need to consider the level of feedback required i.e. one-way or two-way communications; need to consider methods of recording the communication i.e. copies to etc; need to consider timings and costs involved; need to consider use of electronic methods.

External communications reasons: need to consider the reputation of the organisation externally; need to consider the formality of the communication; need to consider the level of feedback required; need to consider the skills required by communicators with external customers; need to consider the different needs of the customers; need to consider cost involved; need to consider the accessibility of the customer to the communication.

Most answers did not fully complete this question. Most only considered either internal or external communications. Many marks were lost here by most candidates.

Question 2

(a) The candidates were required to write a memo to the HR Director. The memo should have been laid out appropriately and contained specific information.

The memo format to include: to/from; date/reference number or department; subject (Recruitment of Temporary Staff). The body of memo should have included: reasons for need to recruit new staff; an indication that the staff will need to be on temporary contracts because of the impending recession to allow maximum flexibility of the workforce; an indication of the timing i.e. quite urgent to get this moving, and some consideration of the next step – i.e. HR manager to arrange for this to happen. In general this was completed reasonably well by most candidates. However, some candidates were still including ‘Dear Sir’ and ‘Yours sincerely’ on the memo which was clearly wrong.

(b) This part of the question required the candidate to write a letter to the applicants requesting them to come for an interview. The letters should be appropriately laid out and contain appropriate content. The business letter should conform to the following format: logo or letter heading of the company, date, reference number, recipient's name and address; appropriate salutation – Dear Mr/Mrs, letter heading – RE Application for.. . The body/content of the letter should call for interview, giving date, time, location and any other information required for the interview i.e. CV etc. There should be an appropriate closure – Yours sincerely. Again, this in general was reasonably completed, but in many cases the content was very brief or the tone was inappropriate and thus marks were lost. Some candidates lost marks for presentation and straddled their answer over two pages – it is always easier to take a fresh page to do this sort of letter.

Question 3

(a) This question required candidates to identify and explain three advantages of using groups to try to solve problems. Answers should have included: greater commitment to the problem – by involving a group of people in the process of decision-making or defining organisational policy, there is likely to be greater understanding and ownership of the final solution; more appropriate decision making – groups generally generate more valued and wide-ranging solutions to problems than an individual. Therefore decisions made by groups tend to be more democratic and more likely to succeed; greater bank of information available – individuals in the group add a wider range of experiences on which to draw or brainstorm about the problem; more courageous suggestions are made in groups – individuals to be more conservative when making important decisions and carrying out tasks although groups tend to decide on a strategy for moving forward than if left to an individual; greater productivity from group – working in groups can often stimulate productivity as the collective will of the group can often make things happen where an individual might struggle to get things underway. Again, this was reasonably answered, although some candidates' answers were very brief and there was not enough explanation.

(b) This part of the question required candidates to identify four characteristics of successful meetings. Answers should have included: desired aims are identified at the beginning of the meetings; members have an interest in the end decision; action points are followed up; meetings takes place in a limited time scale; leader for the meetings is appointed; paperwork such as agenda and minutes from previous meeting are available; agenda and minutes are sent out in good time for the next meeting. Most candidates were able to answer this part also.

(c) This part of the question required candidates to explain the importance of both verbal and non-verbal communication in group meetings. Answers should have included:

Verbal Communication: important to decide on the aim of the message; need to select and deliver the important facts and figures; identify and stress the key points of the message; choose an appropriate verbal style – sincerity, warmth, assertiveness, diplomacy – to create correct atmosphere; choose an appropriate articulation – tone, enunciation, emphasis, volume, projection; monitor feedback constantly – adjust delivery accordingly; end on a positive note.

Non-verbal Communication: need to decide on body stance and gestures – ease, physical presence, enthusiasm – to give the correct cues; need to ensure eye contact – to show sincerity; need to be prepared to listen to feedback and show this; need to check facial expression – to be congruent with verbal communications; need to choose most effective methods of presenting data – charts etc.

Again, some candidates only wrote about either verbal or no-verbal communications and thus lost marks. Again, this part of the question was worth 6 marks but some candidates only wrote bullet points and thus did not receive many marks.

Question 4

(a) This part of the question required the candidate to describe the type of interview structure which was required and explain why they had chosen it. The answer should have considered a structured interview which would have been used for the selection interview, as all candidates were external and not known to the organisation. This would have ensured that all candidates were treated fairly and appropriately. There would be a number of closed questions aimed to find out facts and a number of open or hypothetical questions to allow the candidate to illustrate their previous experience and demonstrate what they could bring to the company. Most candidates did not write much for this part of the question and seemed to have some difficulty in explaining this part of their answer. As this question was worth 10 marks, candidates should have ensured that they covered the answer well.

(b) This part of the question required candidates to identify three purposes of selection interviews. Answers should have included reasons such as: to identify key personal characteristics of the interviewee; to assess the interviewee's essential skills required for the job; to promote the company to the interviewee; to offer the interviewee an opportunity to find out more about the company; to see if the interviewee would 'fit in' the company; to assess the interviewee's personal appearance and punctuality; to identify the interviewee's attitude to a temporary contract. Again, this was worth 6 marks and so very brief answers did not receive all the marks available. Candidates should have discussed each of the three points rather than just offer bullet points for their answer.

(c) This required the candidates to explain open and closed questions. The answers should have included: Closed question – used to find out facts about the candidate such as age, current income, checking skills, checking details on the application form – questions such as 'are you trained to use Excel spreadsheets'. Open questions – used to find out attitudes and past experience – questions such as 'why did you apply for this position?' 'What could you bring to the job?' This was answered reasonably well by most candidates.

Question 5

(a) Candidates were required to prepare a bar chart for some information given in the case study. The bar charts should have been correct and accurate, with the correct values plotted and the correct shaded areas to illustrate the key. The clarity of the chart and correct labelling was also required. 10 marks were available for this, but most candidates were running out of time and thus their bar charts were, in general, very poor and scruffy. No candidates used graph paper.

(b) This required candidates to explain two types of visual aids:

(i) *Pie charts* – the answer should have included explanation of pie charts – good to use for less complex data – but limited to the amount of in-depth information that can be conveyed using a pie or circle chart e.g. some data such as trends is too complex to illustrate this way.

(ii) *Line graphs* – the answers should have discussed the fact that these can be used to show trends, etc. but cannot be readily or clearly interpreted if too much information is plotted e.g. too many lines on one graph is confusing.

The answers here were very patchy, with most candidates not able to explain fully each type of visual aid and thus lost marks.

(c) This part of the question required candidates to explain what could be illustrated via an organisational chart. The answer should have included levels of authority; levels of responsibility; lines of formal communication; the status and role of employees. However, most candidates did not answer this part of the question. This area has not been on an examination paper previously, however, it is on the syllabus and so candidates and Tutors need to ensure that they are familiar with the theory.

BUSINESS FINANCE

Paper 5163

General comments

It is disappointing to report that the performance of many of the candidates in the October 2002 examination was below the standard required to achieve a pass grade in this module. In many instances the responses made by the candidates were too generalised to attract the top marks.

Centres and candidates are once again reminded of the need for precision when offering definitions and/or providing explanations.

Also it is once again necessary to remind Centres and candidates of the need to demonstrate *how* they have arrived at solutions to the tasks. In far too many cases candidates lost marks simply because they did not provide a formula or an explanation of the process that they had employed to reach an answer. Candidates should show their workings.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

Overall the answers provided for the tasks **(a)** – **(e)** were satisfactory. Most candidates were capable of providing a simple explanation of the terms highlighted but often the responses were too generalised to attract the higher order marks available. It was also evident that candidates had not managed their time effectively. Centres and candidates are urged to study the mark allocations carefully, as too much time devoted to a low mark task will inevitably lead to a disappointing overall result.

Task 2

The answers to this task were generally disappointing. Most candidates did not appear to have an understanding of the process that would yield a correct solution to the task.

Task 3

Most candidates provided a satisfactory response to this task and it is clear that this is a topic area that is being well addressed by Centres.

Task 4

Again most candidates were capable of providing satisfactory responses to this task. There was clear evidence of knowledge of accounting concepts but the task also required that candidates provide an explanation of *how* these concepts contribute towards the accuracy of the accounts. Many candidates did not address this issue and therefore lost marks as a result.

Task 5

Most candidates provided a satisfactory response to part **(a)** of this task. However, the answers to part **(b)** were rather patchy. In too many cases candidates identified appropriate methods but they failed to provide an explanation as to how these methods would ensure effective control of working capital.

Task 6

Surprisingly the answers to this task were quite poor. A sizeable minority of candidates appeared to have little knowledge of the structure of a balance sheet and even where the structure was known there was a lack of detail and precision in the answers provided. Centres are reminded of the fundamental importance of the published financial statements within the syllabus and are urged to address this problem.

Task 7

Again the answers provided by the candidates were disappointing with only a minority of candidates being able to make a satisfactory response. Many candidates lost marks simply because they did not provide a formula and/or an explanation of how they were attempting to solve the task.

Task 8

The answers provided for this task were generally satisfactory. Candidates clearly had a good knowledge of the possible sources of finance and in a large majority of cases it was pleasing to see that candidates were prepared to discuss how these sources would affect capital structure and profitability. As a result these candidates were rewarded with reasonable marks.

MARKETING

Paper 5164

General comments

Results at this level are rather disappointing this session, and there are a number of areas in terms of both technique and knowledge of syllabus topics which could be improved. Specific syllabus content areas are covered in the section on tasks below.

Examination techniques could be improved in the following areas –

- *Reading the task carefully (A)*. For example, six of the tasks on this Paper specified a numbered requirement. i.e. a set number of suggestions, factors or influences that needed to be identified and expanded upon. In many cases, these instructions were ignored, wasting candidates' time, as only the number specified could attract marks.
- *Reading the task carefully (B)*. In some cases, although the task required an explanation, many candidates simply listed the items requested. Candidates should be encouraged to practice answering tasks from previous papers to help them to understand the requirements of the tasks set.
- *Poor time management.* This is a common mistake. Candidates who fall into this category often spend too much time on a task with which they are comfortable, leaving insufficient time to complete all remaining tasks. Candidates should note the allocation of marks to each task.
- *Writing 'all that I know' about a topic.* This neither demonstrates understanding of the Case Study and task, nor answers what is required by the task. It also wastes time. Again, this can be improved by looking at past paper tasks in the classroom, to encourage candidates to identify the key issues raised within any task.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

This task aimed to assess candidates understanding of what constitutes a marketing culture, and the reasons why it is desirable in business.

(a) This part of the task was generally done well, with candidates able to identify that, in a marketing culture, all employees work together towards satisfying customer needs.

(b) Most delegates were able to identify five key benefits of keeping customers satisfied such as loyalty, word of mouth recommendation, savings on promotional cost, lower price sensitivity and less attention paid to other brands.

Task 2

This task was designed to assess candidates understanding of marketing research, and their ability to explore the topic related to the Case Study.

(a) It was pleasing to see many candidates able to give a basic description of what marketing research is.

(b) This part of this task generally did not prove too difficult for those who attempted it, although there appeared to be some confusion over which of the three primary research methods would be cheapest.

Task 3

The answers to this task were disappointing, particularly as the stages in the research process were listed for candidates to expand upon. Few candidates linked the stages of the process to the information in the Case Study.

(a) Most candidates did little more than explain that it was important to know the purpose of the research. Few expanded on this in terms of what Stevens' objectives might be, how the objective might influence the next stage in the process, or how objectives would help to measure success.

(b) Answers to this were confused, and did little more than differentiate between secondary and primary research.

(c)(d)(e) These sections of the task was rarely expanded upon.

Task 4

(a) Few candidates were able to give the required examples under each of the PEST headings. Some were not able to make the link between PEST analysis and relevant environmental issues.

(b) This section represented a very easy option for gaining four marks. Candidates simply had to list the four elements of the marketing mix. However, some candidates ignored this section completely.

Task 5

This final task looked at the place, price and promotion elements of the marketing mix in the context of the Case Study.

(a) This part of the task required candidates to draw simple diagrams illustrating the channels to market used by Stevens, the company in the Case Study. Many candidates missed valuable marks on this part of the question by reproducing textbook diagrams of channels to market, and failing to link these to the scenario described.

(b) Many candidates detailed all pricing strategies that they were familiar with, rather than explaining Stevens 'value-added' premium pricing strategy, based on the quality of their products.

(c) Again, many candidates explained promotional activities without responding to the requirements of the task.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Paper 5165

General comments

There was a limited number of candidates entered for this paper and therefore all of the comments are based upon a very small sample. Future papers should see a growth in candidate numbers.

Generally the standard of response was disappointing showing a poor understanding of the questions set and problems with exam technique.

Greater familiarity with examination questions and the skills involved in answering such questions would be beneficial. It appears that the understanding of the content was less of a problem than the application of the knowledge and understanding but on may occasions the candidates had clearly not read the question properly.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) It was intended that this question would enable the candidates to explain processes such as recruitment, selection and induction ("creating relationships") as well as grievance, discipline, resolution of conflict and pay/benefits ("retaining relationships").

Very few candidates achieved this and merely described, without more detailed reference to HRM in general, the role of HRM or the situation at Dockport.

(b) Due to the fact that part **(a)** was poorly answered this excluded many candidates from this question. A few repeated their answers to part **(a)** and the majority made the general point that Dockport were poor at maintaining relationships, which is correct.

It was expected that examples of high labour turnover, dismissals and demotions would be quoted to substantiate the statement that Dockport's HRM was poor.

(c) It was expected that candidates would describe training and development, performance monitoring, career planning and providing the right mix of skills. This part of the question provided the best answers but too many candidates ignored the term "describe" and merely listed other functions.

(d) This part of the question was well answered with the majority of candidates quoting the arguments between the Finance director and the family and the reasons why.

Question 2

(a) Candidates successfully identified training as the answer to this question but some then proceeded to describe *all* of the different types of training instead of how training can help to develop skills. This was a clear case for many candidates of answering their own question rather than the question set.

(b) The majority of answers were linked to money but a number discussed motivation. Better management, longer holidays and bonuses were all suggestions but few candidates produced an answer linked to career development or life long learning.

(c) This question was poorly answered with very few candidates mentioning Equal Opportunities; minimum wages; employment protection; health and safety or Government funded job creation. There appeared to be a lack of understanding about what this question actually required.

(d) The better candidates were able to identify negotiation committees and worker participation but too many candidates relied heavily upon their knowledge of trade unions and detailed ways in which the management should change.

Question 3

(a) This was generally well answered with candidates identifying full-time and part-time contracts and a few also mentioning contracting-out. A few candidates had problems actually explaining what the different contracts are and some confusion does seem to exist between fixed-term and part-time contracts.

(b) This question produced very full answers but the majority concentrated on the wrong aspects. It was expected that candidates would discuss job descriptions, personal specifications and using the correct media. Answers tended to concentrate upon how to advertise and how to promote internally.

(c) Candidates understood what Dockport did that was wrong, but many failed to explain the correct methods for people to be dismissed or leave the company such as retirements, ill-health, redundancy and formal processes.

Question 4

(a) Answers centred on “talking” and using the trade unions. Very little else was offered. The expected systems such as discipline and grievance, TQM and quality initiatives and consultation committees were ignored. This appears to be a weakness in the candidates understanding.

(b) Due to the poor answers to part **(a)** many candidates failed to answer this question and the remainder repeated their answer to part **(a)**.

(c) Candidates are obviously very well taught and understand the concept of appraisal and many of the answers produced long and involved accounts of appraisal systems. Very few candidates produced a second element as requested. It was expected that targets, standards, accountabilities and competences would be listed and explained.

(d) The majority of candidates appeared to have problems with the term “competences” and merely discussed appraisal again often in more detail but not linked to monitoring performance.

Question 5

(a) This is a clear and distinct part of the syllabus, which lists conditions, promotion, job satisfaction, recognition and levels of responsibility. All but the best candidates concentrated on payment and fringe benefits, which missed the aim of the question. A few candidates began to discuss various motivational theories prompted by the term motivation in the question.

(b) This part of the question was answered well because candidates concentrated upon money and payment, often repeating their answer to part **(a)**. All candidates answered this from a theoretical point of view with no one looking at Dockport and suggesting how they could improve conditions by acting fairly, consulting and negotiating and stopping the instant dismissals. Marks can often be gained by referring to the case study. In this way candidates show their application of knowledge, as well as some analysis of the situation.

INTERPERSONAL BUSINESS SKILLS

Papers 5166

General comments

Tutors at Centres need to read and understand the syllabus carefully in order to identify what is required for each module. The expected outcomes are clearly stated in each syllabus. Tutors should, where possible, provide candidates with access to the syllabus, so that candidates who are going to submit assignments for assessment can judge their own work against the demands of the syllabus. Weaknesses have included a failure to include all of the objectives in the candidates' work, no appropriate reference sources used and a failure by the candidate to comment on personal performance, or give opinions of changes, if the same task was undertaken again. Some submissions have been rather bulky but this would not jeopardise a candidate's pass category, if the documentation is appropriate.

It would be helpful to Examiners and Centres if Tutors/Assessors adopted a system of annotating candidates' work with the module objectives, i.e. 2.1, 2.3, 4.1 etc., entered at the appropriate places on their work. This could form a double check for them and their candidates, and would enable a more efficient assessment of their work. Candidates should be encouraged to submit business-like documents with page numbers, a contents page, a summary, and an appendix, as a minimum requirement.

The conclusions/recommendations section of some of the assignments were very brief and no appropriate reference sources were used. Conclusions should be based on a discussion of interpersonal business skills as well as the results of the questionnaires used. Results of surveys could have been presented in the form of a pie chart or bar chart, as this is more business-like and appropriate. More thought should be given to the content of assignments, especially the different sections used. Candidates should be encouraged to refer to the syllabus in order to identify the assessment objectives, competence criteria and the skills and knowledge which their work is expected to demonstrate.

Candidates should aim to present well-laid out assignments with SAR sheets properly completed. Reference sources should be used. Candidates need to be aware that in order to achieve a pass, their work must provide evidence of the module objectives as listed in the module booklet.

These objectives are detailed in the module booklet under 'criteria for assessment'. The candidate's work should provide evidence that the candidates made a presentation to a small group and subsequently made a self-assessment of their performance in this role.

BUSINESS START UP

Papers 5167

General comments

Tutors at Centres need to read and understand the syllabus carefully in order to identify what is required for each module. The expected outcomes are clearly stated in each syllabus. Tutors should, where possible, provide candidates with access to the syllabus, so that candidates who are going to submit assignments for assessment can judge their own work against the demands of the syllabus. Weaknesses have included a failure to include all of the objectives in the candidates' work, no appropriate reference sources used and a failure by the candidate to comment on personal performance, or give opinions of changes, if the same task was undertaken again. Some submissions have been rather bulky but this would not jeopardise a candidate's pass category, if the documentation is appropriate.

It would be helpful to Examiners and Centres if Tutors/Assessors adopted a system of annotating candidates' work with the module objectives, i.e. 2.1, 2.3, 4.1 etc., entered at the appropriate places on their work. This could form a double check for them and their candidates, and would enable a more efficient assessment of their work. Candidates should be encouraged to submit business-like documents with page numbers, a contents page, a summary, and an appendix, as a minimum requirement.

It should be noted that spelling errors should be corrected before sending assignments to be marked. Appropriate reference sources should be used and identified. Submissions which are good quality and contain all the criteria and objectives are those which are more likely to be put in the 'pass' category.

CUSTOMER CARE

Paper 5168

General comments

Tutors at Centres need to read and understand the syllabus carefully in order to identify what is required for each module. The expected outcomes are clearly stated in each syllabus. Tutors should, where possible, provide candidates with access to the syllabus, so that candidates who are going to submit assignments for assessment can judge their own work against the demands of the syllabus. Weaknesses have included a failure to include all of the objectives in the candidates' work, no appropriate reference sources used and a failure by the candidate to comment on personal performance, or give opinions of changes, if the same task was undertaken again. Some submissions have been rather bulky but this would not jeopardise a candidate's pass category, if the documentation is appropriate.

It would be helpful to Examiners and Centres if Tutors/Assessors adopted a system of annotating candidates' work with the module objectives, i.e. 2.1, 2.3, 4.1 etc., entered at the appropriate places on their work. This could form a double check for them and their candidates, and would enable a more efficient assessment of their work. Candidates should be encouraged to submit business-like documents with page numbers, a contents page, a summary, and an appendix, as a minimum requirement.

Some failed assignments had many spelling errors that should have been corrected before submitting. The layout of their work was not business-like and the use of capital lettering throughout distracts from the assignment. Also, the demonstrated module objectives were weak and could have been extended.

Candidates should aim to present well-laid out assignments with SAR sheets properly completed. Reference sources should be used. Candidates need to be aware that in order to achieve a pass, their work must provide evidence of the module objectives as listed in the module booklet.

These objectives are detailed in the module booklet under 'criteria for assessment'. The candidate's work should provide evidence that the candidates made a presentation to a small group and subsequently made a self-assessment of their performance in this role. Appropriate reference sources need to be used. Work which has a business-like presentation is more likely to show an understanding of the importance of customer care.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Paper 5191

General comments

The scheme showed 440% growth in entries between 2001 and 2002 including entries in Spanish and Greek.

The most common errors included:

- Errors in page layout with the failure to set margins or column widths as specified.
- 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.
- The failure to indent the bulleted list by the amount specified on the question paper.
- 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, 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.
- The failure to resize the imported graphic or to text wrap around this graphic.
- Widows and/or orphans were not removed by inserting page breaks.
- Some candidates could not correctly align text, especially when asked to fully justify the body text of a document.