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Cambridge Career Awards in Business - Advanced

BUSINESS ORGANISATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Paper 5171

General comments

The number achieving a pass is quite acceptable but ought to be better. There is, nonetheless, an underlying trend of an improvement in the quality of answers and responses. It appears that with growing experience the syllabus is being delivered satisfactorily although the candidates' examination technique still remains the single most important issue.

As the comments on **Task 1 (a)** below indicate, almost all of the candidates attempting the break-even graph did not read the instructions and so threw away the opportunity of a relatively easy 10 marks. The fact that most of the candidates paid no attention to what was required clearly suggests the need for Tutors to reinforce several aspects of examination etiquette as part of the preparation and revision period. No apologies are made for revisiting the issues previously highlighted, namely:

Candidates should be advised and encouraged to:

- read the examination paper's instructions very carefully
- ensure that they fully understand what the Examiner wants them to do
- lay out their responses clearly
- acknowledge the allocation of marks and respond accordingly
- manage the examination time sensibly
- respond to the tasks in context

The examination is now preceded by 15 minutes reading time so that candidates have the opportunity to read the instructions and get a grasp of the case study upon which the paper is based. The tasks will relate to the case study and, generally speaking, the answers should acknowledge or relate to it i.e. the answers should be made in the context of the case. Ignoring evidence from the case study can be costly in terms of marks. Managing the examination time sensibly needs reinforcement: candidates do not, as a rule, discriminate between the demands of tasks and so often the 10 mark task receives the same treatment as if it were worth 5 marks. The allocation of 10 marks should suggest to a candidate that a more in-depth discussion of the issues is required.

Some papers showed exceptional promise but did not score well because the candidates' time management was poor, largely as a result of writing lengthy essay type responses to 5 mark tasks, instead of providing brief answers, this meant that the first few tasks made excellent and encouraging reading but then the remainder of the paper was hurriedly attempted because time was short, thus denying candidates the high mark they could assuredly achieve. Candidates are reminded that they should not copy out the tasks, albeit not as significant a practice as previously, but it is still done. Tutors should advise against that time wasting effort.

Comments on specific questions

Task 1

(a) The task asked the candidate to 'draw a break-even graph or chart' using the scale of 1cm:$100,000. Sales, profit and fixed costs figures were also given. It offered 10 marks and required a candidate to follow simple instructions and produce an accurate graph from which the break-even point could be calculated. Marks were allocated to the various components of the graph or chart so a candidate could earn some marks for using, for example, the correct scale, or identifying the fixed cost line even if the overall composition was not quite right. This ought to have been a relatively easy 10 marks but the greater majority of candidates, of those who attempted the task, did not read and follow the instructions producing some very curious graphs and results. It was very disappointing that so few made a creditable attempt.

(b)(i) A definition of a mission statement was called for, but, whilst some responses were excellent, many chose to give it much higher status and importance than it deserved, often confusing it for the business plan or a company strategic plan. The mission statement is meant to be brief and to the point; it can be considered a form of motto or slogan which succinctly identifies the main aims of the organisation. It is meant to stimulate employees and attract customers. The bank needed some small assurance that the organisation knew its direction and focus. Many candidates suggested it contains full details of the company's financial proposals which is not required in a mission statement.

(ii) The bank that loaned $150,000 to 'IronF' demanded that one of its own managers be appointed to the Board of Directors and candidates were asked to explain why. Overall, this was done quite well as candidates appreciated the bank's need to monitor the company's progress and to have in place a bank official who could offer advice to relatively inexperienced directors. There was also the important point that the bank wanted to safeguard its investment.

Task 2

(a) This was a 10 mark task calling for some understanding of motivational theory, specifically MacGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, in the context of the case study. Few candidates had any difficulty in describing the essentials of MacGregor's ideas but there was a lack of application to 'IronF'. The Managing Director had remarked that the employees 'will all become Theory Y people'. Candidates needed to reinforce the point that the employees were also the owners so had an incentive to use their initiative and succeed. Equally the company had introduced quality circles and teamworking which offered greater participation in the company. Very few responses were worth more than 6 marks.

(b)(i) Candidates were asked to define *either* teamworking *or* quality circles. The task required one or the other and yet there were those candidates who gave two definitions and, in some few cases, combined both terms in one response. The term 'quality circles' was known and generally well answered but 'teamworking' was largely misunderstood – it was mostly defined as people working together to achieve a common goal which, in essence, was not wrong but what was required was the explanation that a team of employees was expected to complete an entire project rather than concentrating on a component. Only one candidate produced a fully correct answer but 1 or 2 marks were awarded to candidates for the point about common goals.

(ii) This task was generally well tackled and candidates clearly understood the benefits of teamworking and quality circles (even if they had offered a poor response to **(i)** above). The issues were well rehearsed like job enrichment and enlargement for teamworkers and staff involvement and greater motivation for quality circles. Many earned full marks for this task.

Task 3

(a)(i) An expectation of the employees is appropriate financial and non-financial incentives. Full marks could have been earned just for correctly identifying several examples of incentives but there was confusion as to what was financial or non-financial. There were some excellent responses which indicated clearly why employees needed incentives and were supported by relevant examples.

(ii) Employees also expected a channel of communication, consultation and negotiation. Most candidates indicated clear understanding of the issues although a small number identified the use of bulletins, newsletters and company meetings. Some suggested the recognition of trade unions so that the workforce could be represented. Generally this was another task awarded 4 or 5 marks.

(b) This task ought to have been better answered and discussed. The focus of the task was on how the company and the employees would be affected by the introduction of new technology. A lot of emphasis was directed on the employees and the need for retraining and the prospect of redundancy for some. 'IronF' clearly needs to invest in new technology to remain in business and be competitive but few candidates explored how the technology could be used, for example, to make better use of resources, improve financial controls and administration and enhance the quality of their products. Overall, the discussion tended to concentrate on the negative aspects.

Task 4

(a)(i) This task was not well treated at all, as so few understood the meaning of the trade cycle. Those candidates who knew it offered well-constructed answers clearly identifying the 5 year economic cycle of growth and downturn, or in exceptional circumstances boom to slump. Mostly it was confused with a marketing term and suggested the life span of a product. It was only a 5 mark task so an in-depth response was not expected but, having defined the term, it should have been considered within the context of 'IronF' in the case study.

The term 'competition' needed more than just a general definition. Some application to the case study was required. Some candidates suggested 'IronF' could be affected by pricing and technology but few even considered the importance of competition in encouraging creativity, improving quality, introducing a new product, improving customer care.

(b) This task represents lost opportunities for most. In fairness, a number of responses were full with much discussion but not all of it relevant or knowledgeable. Candidates were asked to discuss two examples of likely Government support and incentives to encourage the company to relocate to another region. This demanded some awareness of the various schemes made available by most Governments and a thorough argument was not expected. Candidates could choose from such schemes as tax relief, tax holidays, training costs allowances, modernisation grants, employment creation grants, financial support for environmentally friendly buildings. Whilst some good examples were offered by most, there was a lack of clear definition and indication of awareness. There were those who felt the Government should become a major shareholder.

Task 5

(a)(i) Generally destroyer pricing was understood although the definitions were often limited e.g. they did not fully express the desired impact on the competitors, namely that they should be put out of the market i.e. destroyed. However, there was a high awareness of the term and candidates scored well.

(ii) Equally, the reasons why 'IronF' needed to appoint an agent were largely understood and some interpretation of the case was evident. Like **(i)** above this proved to be a successful task with most earning 3 or more marks.

(b) This task was either extensively answered or very badly attempted. It gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of marketing although a number restricted their approaches to explanations of the 4Ps – which was acceptable depending upon the quality of the discussion. A number of answers were quite comprehensive with adequate reference to branding, pricing, advertising, budgets, resources, SWOT.

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Paper 5172

General comments

Candidate performance

Once again, in a number of Centres, the pass rate for this paper was 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 1 (a)** asked for *types* of communication and the answers should have included meetings or seminars, or written communication. However, a number of candidates seemed to answer the question from the previous exam paper and gave suggestions about structures of communications such as horizontal and other areas such as verbal, non-verbal and paralanguage which was clearly not required.

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 5 (a)** which required the candidates to explain and give an advantage and a disadvantage for each type of visual aid offered. The majority of answers only gave an advantage and a disadvantage but did not explain the type of visual aid and thus 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, especially within certain overseas 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 excellent 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

It seemed that many candidates had specific problems with the following areas of the syllabus:

- Report structure and stages
- Computer applications such as electronic notepads and desk top publishing
- The characteristics of a press release
- Advantages and disadvantages of specific visual aids

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) This required candidates to identify four potential causes of poor communication towards the employees within the organisation. The answers should have included the following: the lack of a clear aim or purpose of communication, the use of inappropriate language such as 'management' speak, the staff being unable to understand the message due to education/experience levels, the use of inappropriate medium such as informal chats or slips in wage packages, or the lack of regular communication. Many candidates were able to do this quite well. The best marks awarded were for answers which also applied the points above to the case study.

(b) This required the candidates to suggest and justify three types of communications which should be undertaken to help the situation. The answer should have included: staff meetings – two way communications, immediate and transparent, team meetings – two way communications, smaller groups allowing further discussion, seminars – two way communications, immediate information, etc, written confirmation in the form of briefing papers, company report, employee news letters, one way, but permanent and can be read at leisure. Some candidates did not consider the types of communication but wrote about communication in general and covered areas such as meta communication etc (which was on last year's paper). Some candidates did not justify the methods identified and thus lost marks for this. Some answers were very brief and again did not attract many marks.

Question 2

(a) This question required the candidates to identify the key stages of a report which the Directors would have to undertake. This should have included: deciding on the terms of reference, e.g. to report on the key issues which the organisation are facing and the improvements for customer service and communication, researching/assembling the materials, e.g. gathering further information and evidence about the problem of wrong bills being sent out, research into the reasons, organising the material: e.g. compiling the material by analysis methods and allocating it to the appropriate sections of the report, writing the draft - e.g. draft report, editing the materials - e.g. ensuring that the final report makes sense and is readable, stating findings, reaching conclusions, e.g. stating reasons for problems and why these occurred, making recommendations, e.g. what might be suggested as possible strategies to combat these problems. Many candidates were not able to identify all stages fully which was very disappointing. Good answers detailed all stages and explained them.

(b) This section of the question required candidates to explain and evaluate a range of computer applications and the answers should have included the following:

(i) *Databases*, used to collate information on customer information, could be used to identify the customer behaviour etc

(ii) *Electronic notepads* – used as a mobile form of communication, for members of staff travelling to connect into the main Intranet or Internet.

(iii) *Spreadsheets* – used to analyse data, complex formulae can be used to statistically interrogate information, used for charting data.

(iv) *Desk top publishing* – used to present the report in a professional manner, use of clipart etc.

Most candidates seemed to have major problems with this question. Most could not explain each and only a very few were able to evaluate such applications as required.

(c) This part of the question required candidates to list four characteristics of a press release. The answers should have included: written for publication to different audiences – journalist and target audience, content - information needs to be newsworthy, credible, true, etc, structure and style - needs to include headline, include facts, quotations, embargo date, needs to be double line spaced, include photos etc, needs to be checked internally before release, etc. Most candidates could not answer this part of the question and those who did answer it seemed to be guessing and their answers were very weak. This area may come up again on the examination paper and thus all candidates should ensure that they are able to answer such questions.

Question 3

(a) This part of the question required candidates to identify and explain five characteristics of an effective and successful meeting with employees. The answers should have included: aims and objectives outlined, action points highlighted, time constraints adhered to, leadership provided, preparation and use of an agenda, the use of minutes, the role of key participants – chairperson, secretary, treasurer. Most candidates were able to answer this question, however, not many noticed that this part of the question was worth 10 marks and thus each of the five points was worth 2 marks and thus an explanation was required not just 1 or 2 word answers.

(b) The candidates were required to explain the characteristics of effective groups such as: structure of group; culture within group and organisation; development of trust within the group; level of support within the group; consultation and communication; involvement in decision-making. Most candidates were happy with this question and some reasonable answers were offered. However, the poorer answers again were very brief and not worth the 10 marks available.

Question 4

(a) This question required candidates to explain how interviewees should prepare for an interview. The answer should have included: the preparation and review of own strengths and weaknesses; review of past performance; consideration of the future ambitions; presentation of good personal image; undertaking of background research on the organisation; preparation and offering a portfolio of previous work as evidence; personal grooming. Again, most candidates were happy with this and offered reasonable answers. The poorer answers only offered 1 or 2 points and these were bulleted rather than explained as required in the question.

(b) Candidates were required to identify how interviewers should plan for interviews. The answers should have included the planning of the interview; the consideration of the purpose of interview; liaison with other members of the interview panel – i.e. HR; consideration of location, timing and structure of interview and prepare questions. Again answers here were reasonably well constructed and most candidates gained some good marks here.

(c) The final part of the question required candidates to explain three types of questions which could have been used by the interviewers. The answers should have included closed, leading, open or hypothetical questions. Better answers offered an example of the type of question which was suggested. Once again, a few candidates seemed to be confused here and just gave three questions which was clearly not required and thus they only received minimal marks.

Question 5

(a) Candidates were asked to explain four particular types of visual aids and give one advantage and one disadvantage of using these aids. The answers should have included the following:

(i) *Explanation of tables* – good for tabulating complex information, limited immediate visual impact and difficult to interpret readily

(ii) *Explanation of line graphs* – good for showing trends, cannot readily or clearly be interpreted if too many plotted lines of information, therefore not helpful for complex information

(iii) *Explanation of bar charts* – again good for showing trends, different types such as 3D etc can be used, limited visual impact if results are very close in value.

(iv) *Explanation of pie charts* – total value of items must be known, use of colours to enhance impact, limited to the amount of in-depth information that can be conveyed using a pie chart, need to work out in terms of 360%.

The good answers received 1 mark per explanation, 1 mark per disadvantage and 1 mark per advantage for each, which equated to 12 marks. However, most candidates only offered the disadvantages and advantages (and some used the same for all – which did not gain marks) and did not include an explanation as required and so lost easy marks here.

(b) Candidates were required to use information in the case study and present it in the form of a most suitable graph. Most candidates ran out of time, but some were able to do this well and offered a well presented bar chart or line graph. Good marks were received if the graph was correct and accurate, with correct labelling and shading.

Therefore, the answers to this question overall were very poor. This may have been due to poor time management or lack of knowledge. In future candidates should ensure that they apportion their time appropriately and that they have sufficient knowledge in this area.

BUSINESS FINANCE

Paper 5173

General comments

It is disappointing to report that the overall performance of candidates in the October 2002 examination fell below the level seen in the previous two examinations. To some extent this may be explained by a poor reaction to one particular question (see later), but, in addition, there was evidence that candidates did not manage their time effectively. Centres and candidates are urged to study the mark allocations carefully in order to gain maximum benefits from their efforts.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

Overall the answers to this task **(a)** – **(f)** were satisfactory and indicated that the candidates had a reasonable grasp of topics across the breadth of the syllabus. However in a minority of cases candidates provide little more than a listing of points when they were being asked to provide explanations. As a result they were only awarded the lower order marks. Centres are recommended to allocate some of their teaching time to coach candidates in examination technique, in particular, in identifying the meaning of the key/prompt words.

Task 2

Generally the responses to this task **(a)** – **(c)** were of an acceptable standard. However to achieve the top marks candidates needed to provide precise definitions and well-reasoned explanations. This was not often provided.

Task 3

Surprisingly, this task produced poor responses from the majority of candidates. It would seem to indicate a serious gap in the knowledge of the candidates. Although this was the first time that this topic area had appeared as a examination question, it must be considered to be a legitimate examination topic and therefore Centres are urged to address this issue as matter of some urgency.

Task 4

This task was generally approached well by the majority of candidates. Most candidates could provide a list of concepts and were capable of producing satisfactory explanations of their chosen concepts. However the impact that the concepts have on the published accounts was less well covered.

Centres and candidates are urged to read the tasks carefully. Only three concepts were required, but in some cases candidates provided additional concepts for which they could not receive any credit.

Task 5

(a) The answers provided for this task were either very good with candidates achieving full marks, or they were very poor with the candidates struggling to provide any evidence of the process necessary to complete the task. Centres and candidates are once again reminded of the need to provide evidence of *how* they are attempting to derive solutions for the tasks. The inclusion of a relevant formula would have assisted some of the weaker candidates to achieve a better result. Candidates are encouraged to show their workings.

(b) Many candidates chose to ignore this part of the task and as a consequence received no marks at all. *In order to give themselves the best possible chance of success candidates must attempt to answer all elements of all of the tasks on the paper.*

Task 6

(a) The majority of candidates provided satisfactory definitions of both bonus and rights issues.

(b) Unfortunately only a small minority of the candidates could provide a satisfactory and complete answer to this part of the task.

(c) Many candidates simply explained the difference between share capital and debentures rather than considering the risk implications as required by the question. As a result they were not entitled to marks at the top end of the scale.

Task 7

The majority of candidates clearly understand the process required to produce a correct solution to this task. It was, however, disappointing to see that although all of the calculations had been successfully completed, many candidates did not explicitly provide figures for *both* stock issued and closing stock. *Candidates must ensure that they provide all elements of the answer as required by the task.*

MARKETING

Paper 5174

General comments

It is pleasing to see some improvements in overall performance at this level this Session. However, there are still 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 question 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 question 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 required candidates to demonstrate both an understanding of the marketing concept and ways in which *co-ordinating* marketing activities can help to achieve the tasks marketing has to undertake. Many candidates either ignored or did not understand the need to focus on co-ordinating, and simply explained customer satisfaction, marketing objectives, etc.

(a) Most candidates answered this section with few problems. The key elements required were 'whole of the organisation', 'customer needs', 'co-ordination of activities' and 'organisation's goals'.

(b)(i) Most candidates were able to explain customer satisfaction, but few referred to the way in which effectively co-ordinating marketing activities contributed to this area.

(ii) Most candidates were able to explain what marketing objectives are, but few referred to the way in which effectively co-ordinating marketing activities contributed to their achievement.

(iii) Some candidates were able to link this part of the task to PEST analysis, but few referred to the way in which effectively co-ordinating marketing activities contributed to this area.

(iv) The majority of candidates wrote about organisational cost savings, with no reference to marketing.

Task 2

This task was completed well by most candidates that attempted it. It is pleasing to see an improvement of understanding in this area, which is so important to meeting customer needs.

Task 3

This task was more complex than the last, although it was still focused on the area of marketing research. Performance on this task varied from Centre to Centre. Those that were able to identify the factors relevant to the evaluation of suitability of data collection methods did well.

Task 4

This task was generally done well, although some candidates ignored the requirement for *two* segmentation bases, and wrote about several. This wastes time as further explanations do not attract marks.

Task 5

Again, this task proved a relatively straightforward way to attract maximum marks for those who correctly identified *personal* influences on buying decisions, and linked these to toothpaste. Unfortunately candidates from some Centres put forward the five stages of the consumer buying process in answer to this task. This was not what was required.

Task 6

Candidates that attempted this task generally did well, and were able to identify three appropriate stages of the marketing planning process. Some candidates used segmentation, targeting and positioning as three separate stages, and these candidates were awarded reduced marks, as these issues are generally undertaken as one stage of the planning process.

Task 7

Candidates that were familiar with Ansoff's matrix did very well here, although many assumed that the options in the Case Study would match all of the quadrants in the matrix. In this Case Study, this was not the case, and there was no option given that would have been categorised as 'diversification'.

Task 8

This task was undertaken fairly well, although some candidates did not include sufficient detail to attract the full 20 marks allocated.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Paper 5175

General comments

This paper was successful in that it differentiated between the more able and less able candidates. Few candidates failed to attempt every question but **Questions 1** and **4** were poorly answered by the majority showing a lack of depth of understanding of sections 1.0 and 4.0 of the syllabus, these are areas that need to be addressed by Centres.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The area of the syllabus to which this question relates, 1.0 – *"Understand Human Resource Management, its development, purpose and organisation"*, is clearly an area that candidates have great difficulty with. Whilst the candidate's knowledge may be reasonable their understanding of what is involved is only superficial. There is a great deal of confusion between organisational and strategic use of HRM.

(a) A great deal of confusion was apparent between the operational and strategic elements of a business and their time periods. Many of the comments made were simplistic and even the better candidates failed to go beyond and extended list – welfare, controlling costs, creating and maintaining relationships, conflict resolution, providing the right mix of operational skills. The term "Discuss" was largely ignored.

(b) Again as for part **(a)**, confusion exists but clearly this was less well understood than operational HRM. Answers were simplistic – higher management – or an extended listing – opportunities for growth and change, reacting to change, development of the organisation, providing resources and purpose.

Question 2

Candidates clearly understand this part of the syllabus and understood the points made in the case study. The problems arose when candidates were unable to distinguish what each part of the question required showing a deficiency in examination technique.

(a) Candidates produced a number of ways in which the employment market can be effected by legislation. However, many candidates seemed confused between those factors that exist because of competition and those that exist due to legislation. Many candidates also answered in the context of NWO which was not required and left little to produce in part **(b)**. The better candidates listed and described legislation that included pay and tax; minimum wages; health and safety; maternity/paternity provision; training funded by the Government and job creation.

(b) Many candidates merely repeated parts of their answer to part **(a)** and others discussed competition. The better candidates explained the concepts of equal opportunities with respect to the "African first" policy and employment protection.

Question 3

Candidates clearly understand this part of the syllabus, the way in which their learning related to the case study and what was required from the questions. As a whole this question was answered better than any other on the paper.

(a) The majority of candidates discussed the new technology and the need for training and many linked this to the need for new skills. The effect that this would have on NWO was unfortunately lacking in many answers.

(b) Very few candidates failed to find five changes in NWO's policies caused by competition or political pressures – succession planning; retaining of staff; "African first" policy; local Government policies; new rules and bureaucracy; political instability. Candidates who provided good explanations were able to gain extra marks. These candidates were able to show application of knowledge, as well as analytical and evaluation skills.

Question 4

This question was for many Centres, the most poorly answered question on the paper. Candidates displayed a lack of basic knowledge on contracts and methods of terminating them. This is an area that may require some work for certain Centres.

(a) Too many candidates failed to recognise the different types of contract – full-time, part-time, temporary, fixed and casual. Too often candidates became confused with working conditions and actual jobs – safari guide – and seemed to assume that these were contracts.

(b) Despite a number of clues, only the very best candidates seemed able to answer this question. The same confusions that existed in part **(a)** continued in this part of the question.

Question 5

This was a very good discriminator between the best and worst candidates. It clearly showed that all of the candidates understood this part of the syllabus, but to different degrees, or were able to express their understanding at different levels.

(a) The majority of candidates clearly understood that the political and competitive pressures were the reasons for monitoring staff. The quality of the explanation clearly separated the range of candidates.

(b) This part of the question clearly differentiated between the candidates, with the best providing a range of methods – appraisal, targets, standards, competencies and accountabilities, and the weaker candidates explaining appraisal systems but not really explaining *how* they would measure performance.

(c) Almost every candidate was able to produce a list of ways in which NWO could increase staff motivation including monetary and non-monetary, fringe benefits, rewards. Frequently the list exceeded the five ways requested.

INTERPERSONAL BUSINESS SKILLS

Papers 5176

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.

Quality submissions were of a high standard. All objectives were identified in the text of the work and reference sources were used, but could have been emphasised. One candidate had exceeded the recommended total number of words but it was a quality submission with a good flow and easy to follow plan of composition.

Successful assignments demonstrated evidence of all objectives in the text and have useful references to resource material. The module guidelines, as found in the syllabus booklet have been followed.

A failed assignment was handwritten and untidy and certainly not business-like. No appropriate reference sources were used and the page numbering was incomplete. No proper conclusions/recommendations section was included. Candidates need to make sure that the layout of their work is business-like and appropriate.

It is apparent that successful candidates work hard with their tasks, and at compiling their reports. In some cases the first impression was that evidence of reference sources and 'praise and criticism' had not been included in the assignments, however, they were found in descriptions of surveyed organisations and the main text of candidates' work. This proved to be satisfactory and sufficient under the assignment guidelines. However, the more successful candidates showed that they were aware of the actual requirements, as stated in the syllabus, and identified where the evidence for the competence criteria could be found in their assignments. This was done in a number of ways, which included a summary, a list or page references.

BUSINESS START UP

Paper 5177

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.

Generally, good quality submissions are usually properly laid out and presented and SAR sheets are fully completed. In cases where the SAR was incomplete but candidates had demonstrated appropriate objectives in their assignments this was not such a crucial issue.

One candidate who was failed did not demonstrate an acceptable knowledge of 'finance' throughout the report and no evidence of 3.4, 'Explain and demonstrate understanding of the process of forecasting costs and profit', was offered. This is a serious omission in an assignment on a business start-up, as most business models include detailed consideration of company finances. The same candidate did not provide appropriate reference for any of the source materials used.

CUSTOMER CARE

Paper 5178

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.

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Failed candidates often do not include evidence of the module objectives and no appropriate reference sources are used. Better candidates have used the objectives as sub-headings in their assignments. This is a very good idea. These assignments also featured appropriate reference sources with work well laid out and presented.

Other failed assignments did not contain evidence that a questionnaire had been used by the candidate and therefore no analysis of data was included, again, no appropriate reference sources were selected.

In some Centres the assignments featured tasks set by the Tutor/Assessor. This helped candidates to ensure that all objectives were covered. For example one Centre submitted assignments which were based on two elements. The first part was the candidate's responses to tutor-provided task sheets, and the second part featured separate surveys carried out at a particular business. This was completely satisfactory and all criteria and module objectives were demonstrated in the text of the assignments. The work was of good quality but the layout of the submitted work could have been improved. Centres should encourage their candidates to present assignments of good quality, which are well laid out and presented.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Paper 5201

The most common errors included:

- 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.
- Widows, orphans, numbered lists or tables split across a page were not removed by inserting page breaks.
- Charts that were inserted but were unreadable, either because of the scaling of the chart or because of errors in the data series (usually because too much data had been selected as it was created).
- Errors inserting new text into a numbered list and renumbering as specified in the question paper.
- Errors in searching and sorting the database extract (particularly in maintaining the data integrity).
- 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.