

Examiner's Report

December 2018 Session

**Paper 2
Business Communication and
Organization and Management**

General Comments

This examination paper focuses on three competency levels: awareness, knowledge, and application. Every component of the syllabus is assigned a level of competence to help candidates allocate their time and effort in studying each of them. Candidates are required to demonstrate their understanding of the essential communication skills and knowledge of the basic concepts of organisation and management expected of accounting technicians.

This is the last session of AAT Examination. The main reason for failure was candidates' poor performance in the compulsory questions in Section B and the essay-type questions in Section C which required the application of the relevant knowledge to a business scenario.

Section A – 15 Multiple-choice Questions

Candidates generally performed well in this part. The questions were set to test the understanding of the basic concepts of Business Communication (BC) and Organization & Management (O&M). This shows that candidates realised the importance to cover the whole syllabus adequately in their study.

Section B – 3 Compulsory Questions

There were three compulsory short questions which tested candidates' comprehension of various BC and O&M subjects. Candidates were required to show their understanding of the relevant key concepts and their ability to describe and discriminate between the components of the concepts and their interrelationships. They were also expected to give short and precise answers to these questions.

The overall performance was satisfactory. Although these questions were compulsory, few candidates failed to answer them all and seemed to have difficulty in answering questions which required knowledge of day-to-day business communication. This reflects their insufficient preparation for this examination. Candidates are strongly advised to study in detail all the topics of the syllabus.

Question B1

Some scored very low marks in part (a) which tested candidates' ability to write a short paragraph using seven given words/phrases. Although these words/phrases are frequently used in business communication, most failed to use them to write some grammatically correct and coherent sentences. Many misused the words: "synergy", "capitalise" and "cater". Part (b) of this question, which asked candidates to describe the key aspects that writers need to pay attention to at the proofreading stage, was answered satisfactorily.

Question B2

This was a straightforward question on the means of communication, their advantages, and limitations, and abbreviations. Although the abbreviations are common in business, quite a number failed to answer correctly. This shows that candidates were not well-prepared and they only had limited exposure in reading and drafting business documents.

Question B3

Candidates generally performed well in this question which asked for the explanations of some marketing terms as well as the major objectives of an induction. Since these were frequently tested O&M subjects, this part was well answered generally.

Section C – 3 Optional Questions

In this section, candidates were required to answer two out of the three optional essay-type questions. These questions tested candidates' ability to apply their knowledge, within the context of a given problem or real world situation, to the requirements of the questions. Candidates were expected to understand and analyse the information given and organise their answers in accordance with the specific requirements of each question.

Each essay-type question in this section incorporated both BC and O&M subjects. The overall performance varied greatly amongst candidates. While quite a number failed badly in both optional questions, some passed both with flying colours.

Question C1

Part (a) of the question examined candidates' knowledge of organisational structure and financial statements. Despite these subject areas are well discussed in the study text, many candidates were unable to give a concrete answer. Many could not explain and failed to apply to the business circumstances. Part (b) asked candidates to identify one meeting problem and describe the aspects to evaluate the effectiveness of a meeting. Candidates generally performed better in this part.

Question C2

Many candidates attempted this question. Part (a) required candidates, in their role as the marketing manager of a company, to write a letter of congratulation to foster good business relationship. Part (b) asked candidates to state and explain the characteristics of international business environment.

For part (a), not many candidates managed to produce a sincere and appealing letter. While most failed to accentuate the importance of cordial relationship to assure future collaboration when showing knowledge of the reader's accomplishments, many had difficulty even in writing comprehensible sentences and adopting a tone appropriate to the circumstances. Their major problems were:

- poor grammar / choice of expressions with many major spelling errors;
- blatant copying of sentences word for word from the narrative without including original ideas or additional supporting details/examples;
- poor organisation of content; and
- inappropriate letter layout.

For part (b), candidates generally performed better.

Question C3

Part (a) asked candidates, in their role as a general manager of a beverage company planning to launch a new product, to write a memo to alert marketing staff on the risk of promotional game. Part (b) examined candidates' ability to explain the various stages of a product life cycle.

Although many did well in part (a), few merely copied the sentences directly from the narrative without regard to the coherence of the messages to be conveyed through the memo. Some failed to precisely explain the potential risk of unsupervised lucky draw event and the possible consequences of improper behaviour. Few even failed to provide the suggestions to avoid possible mistakes. Other common reasons for loss of marks included:

- failure to provide a positive close for unity and harmonious atmosphere;
- poor grammar with many major spelling mistakes; and
- unpleasant tone and inappropriate memo layout.

For part (b), candidates generally were able to explain the various stages of a product life cycle.

Summary

Candidates are strongly advised to study through **ALL** subject areas covered in the syllabus, particularly the O&M ones, failing which they could fail in the examination. In general, there is much room for improvement in their language skills. They should make more efforts to practise well for the writing tasks in the examination.

[END OF EXAMINER'S REPORT]