

Examiner's Report

June 2017 Session

Paper 2

**Business Communication and
Organization and Management**

General Comments

This question paper was consistent with the requirements of the New Qualification Framework which 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.

The overall performance was not as good as the last examination session. 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

The performance varied greatly. Quite a number failed poorly, while a few performed outstandingly well. The questions were set to test the understanding of the basic concepts of Business Communication (BC) and Organization & Management (O&M). This seems to reflect that quite a number failed to cover the whole syllabus adequately.

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 not satisfactory. Many 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 eight 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: "compliments", "additional" and "appreciate". Part (b), which asked candidates to state the meanings of some common terms used in business writing, was generally performed satisfactorily.

Question B2

Candidates generally performed poor in this question. The question tested candidates' understanding of a business report, including the purpose, the reasons to remain objective, the aspects to evaluate a quality report, and the characteristics of written communication. Although these areas had been tested previously, quite a number failed to answer correctly. This shows that candidates had difficulty in questions which required explanations of key concepts in business communication.

Question B3

Candidates generally performed well in this question. The question asked candidates to explain the characteristics of service products and the four Ps in marketing mix. Probably because these were frequently tested O&M subjects, this was the best answered one in Section B.

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

Many candidates attempted this question but performed unsatisfactorily. Notwithstanding that candidates pursuing the AAT qualification should be conversant with the basic concepts of financial management, many failed to give relevant answers. Part (a) of the question examined candidates' knowledge of financial statements and ratios. Despite these subject areas are being well discussed in the study text, many were unable to appreciate fully what the question required. Part (b) asked candidates to define the different levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and its usefulness in business communication. Candidates generally performed better in this part.

Question C2

This question was divided into two parts. Part (a) required candidates, in their role as the office manager of a company, to write a letter requesting an immediate onsite overhaul while the warranty cards were missing. Part (b) asked candidates to state and explain the characteristics of four decision-making styles and identify the situations in which they might perform best.

For part (a), not many candidates managed to produce a reasoned and polite request letter. While most failed to accentuate the importance of cordial relationship to assure future collaboration when requesting for immediate response, 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

Again, this question consisted of two parts. Part (a) asked candidates, in their role as an operations manager of a fast-growing company in fashion chain store business, to write a memo to clarify some negative comments on social media. Part (b) examined candidates' ability to explain the qualities that customers expect in good services.

Only few did well in part (a), and most scored low marks. Although many managed to provide suggestions to avoid the misunderstanding from customers, a robust statement alerting readers to be watchful and to report any illegal behavior was generally neglected. Some categorically copied the sentences directly from the narrative without regard to the coherence and lucidity of the messages required to be conveyed through the memo. The majority further failed to precisely highlight the seriousness of the problem and its possible consequences and penalties. 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), generally candidates were able to explain the qualities that customers expect in good service.

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 efforts to practise well for the writing tasks in the examination.

[END OF EXAMINER'S REPORT]