

Examiner's Report

June 2009 Session

Paper 2

**Business Communication and
Organization and Management**

General Comments

This is the first examination for Paper 2 under the New Qualification Framework.

To pass this paper, candidates must be able to demonstrate not only a basic understanding of the subject matter but more importantly the ability to apply this knowledge to everyday business communications.

The content of the question paper for this examination is consistent with the requirements of the new qualification framework which focuses on three competency levels: awareness, knowledge and application. Each component of the syllabus is assigned a level of competence and this can help candidates to both prepare for the examination as well as determining how much effort is required in studying for each component. For example, a level three component requires a candidate to be able to apply the knowledge to a business scenario whilst a level one component only requires them to possess a basic understanding of the concept and the environment in which it may be used.

The candidates' performance in this examination has improved compared to recent examinations. The main reason for failures was that candidates were only able to satisfactorily complete one of the section C optional questions (see section C below).

Candidates are advised to practise their reading and comprehension skills by reading case studies and applying the theories to these cases. For instance reading articles in English newspapers or reviewing past examination papers and determining the types of communication techniques used or understanding the underlying business management issues are all effective practices.

Since marks are awarded for English writing proficiency and presentation, candidates should write legibly and lay out their work in an easily readable format.

Section A – 15 Multiple-choice Questions

This section tested candidates' knowledge of the basic concepts of business communications and focused on level one awareness. Thus candidates were required to demonstrate familiarity with the concept such as defining it or relating it to the routine activities of an accounting technician.

This section was well-performed with over three-quarters of candidates obtaining a passing grade. This highlights that candidates could achieve level one awareness of the subject material.

Section B – 3 Compulsory Questions

This section tested candidates' comprehension using short answer questions which focused on level two competencies. Candidates were expected to explain a concept in more detail and discriminate between its components parts.

The performance in this section varied greatly amongst the three compulsory questions.

Question B1

This question focused on presenting information in a concise, logical and understandable way in both written and graphical formats. This question was attempted by almost all candidates with a very high percentage of candidates achieving a passing grade. Surprisingly, some candidates were not familiar with a number of very common business terms, such as CEO and CFO, or note taking symbols such as ↓ to denote reduction. A few candidates did not even attempt to draw the graph.

Question B2

This question focused on different elements of one of the most important aspects of business communication – a report. Although this question was attempted by a very high percentage of candidates, only a third of them achieved a passing grade. The main reason for this was that candidates were unable to answer the last part of the question regarding the descriptions of the elements that should be considered in the layout of a report.

Question B3

This question focused on the differing roles of management and how decisions are made in traditional hierarchical organisations. This question again was attempted by a very high percentage of candidates and more than half achieved a passing grade, which was mainly due to their familiarity with the roles and responsibilities of management. However, not many candidates were able to describe the different decision making processes.

Section C – 3 Optional Questions

This section tested candidates' ability to execute or implement knowledge using long answer questions which focused on level three competencies. Candidates were expected to apply their knowledge to solve problems in real world situations. The key to answering these questions was based on comprehending a given business situation and then applying the relevant concepts studied in the course. In addition, it was important that candidates could identify the key statements in the narrative and focused on their use in the answers.

A number of candidates failed to apply the course concepts and relied instead on general knowledge. Others lost marks because they copied unrelated text as their answers rather than paraphrasing the required content.

Question C1

This question aimed at testing the ability to comprehend and extract business information related to a board of directors' meeting. It then focused on the use of the extracted information to prepare a concise memorandum to several department heads.

Almost all candidates attempted this question and approximately two-thirds of them received a passing grade. Candidates were also given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge by discussing any three attributes of a memorandum.

The main reasons for candidates to lose marks in the preparation of the memorandum were:

- Not using a full block layout (consistent with the poor performance in Question B2); or
- Being verbose or not paraphrasing.

Question C2

This question focused on testing the candidates' ability to comprehend a given business scenario and applying the communications theories discussed in the course. The narrative also contained superfluous information and candidates were required to comprehend only the relevant information needed to answer the questions.

Candidates were expected to apply their knowledge of communication processes to discuss the factors that a company should consider in its approach to communicating with a consumer market segment.

The main reason for losing marks in answering this question was because of poor comprehension in both reading the scenario and the questions. Some examples were:

- Discussion of communication methods between the CEO and GM; or

- Failure to discuss the barriers to communication.

This question was the most challenging question to the candidates. While two-thirds of the candidates attempted it only a few of them received a passing grade.

Question C3

Again this question focused on the ability to comprehend a given business scenario. Candidates had to apply their understanding of the marketing concepts to determine appropriate marketing strategies, discuss the components of a market research plan and the types of data that could be used in the marketing plan.

The main reasons for losing marks in answering this question were:

- Failure to describe or discuss the different components of the Ansoff Matrix
- Failure to identify the different approaches necessary to expand the company's markets;
- Failure to describe the steps of a market research plan; or
- Failure to explain the different types of data.

One-third of candidates attempted this question and less than half of them received a passing grade.

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