

Level 1 Certificate in Business Administration



International
Qualifications from EDI

Annual Qualification Review

2008

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INTRODUCTION

The annual qualification review provides qualification-specific support and guidance to centres. This information is designed to help teachers preparing to teach the subject and to help candidates preparing to take the examination.

The reviews are published in October and take into account candidate performance, demonstrated in both on demand and series examinations, over the preceding 12 months. Global pass rates are published so you can measure the performance of your centre against these.

The review identifies candidate strengths and weaknesses by syllabus topic area and provides examples of good and poorer candidate responses. It should therefore be read in conjunction with details of the structure and learning objectives contained within the syllabus for this qualification found on the website.

The review also identifies any actual or proposed changes to the syllabus or question types together with their implications.

PASS RATE STATISTICS

The following statistics are based on the performance of candidates who took this qualification between 1 October 2007 and 30 September 2008.

Global pass rate 85.51%

Grade distributions

Pass	15.91%
Credit	26.72%
Distinction	42.87%

GENERAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Strengths

- Performing well at the completion of practical tasks/form completion
- Knowledge of stock control and the receptionist
- Sound time management of completing answers

Weaknesses

- Answering questions relating to syllabus topics 4 and 7, namely, storage and retrieval of information and services provided by outside agencies
- Petty cash accounts
- Lack of knowledge of modern office technology

TEACHING POINTS BY SYLLABUS TOPIC

Syllabus Topic Area 1: Office Organisation

Candidates are generally soundly prepared for this syllabus topic area. Sound knowledge is shown on the work in departments, organisation charts and the differences between office layouts. However, some candidates have difficulty in applying their knowledge. For example, when candidates are asked to complete an organisation chart with information provided or when asked to identify named departments that would deal with particular duties. In this instance, the purchasing and marketing departments often become confused with each other.

Specific recommendations are that candidates need to:

- practice completing organisation charts from given information.
- use examples of departments working co-operatively in order to show the importance of this work.

Syllabus Topic Area 2: Documentation

Candidates generally have sound knowledge in describing the uses of commercial documents but have much difficulty with explaining commercial terms and abbreviations and completing correctly petty cash record forms, particularly balancing off the petty cash account.

The teaching points for the candidates are:

- revise the meanings of all syllabus commercial terms and abbreviations.
- more practice needed in balancing off petty cash accounts.

Syllabus Topic Area 3: Materials and stationery

This is a popular choice and the topics of stock control and form completion are generally soundly taught and learned. The most frequent problem is sometimes poor presentation of form completion, with crossings out and scruffy handwriting hindering the overall presentation required. Candidates need to be reminded that they are able to make a second attempt and cross out the first attempt in the actual examination.

The teaching points are:

- regular practice of form completion.
- a wide range of forms should be used as practical tasks.
- pay attention to handwriting on forms, paying attention to spelling errors and punctuation.

Syllabus Topic Area 4: Storage and retrieval of information

Candidates tend to avoid questions on this topic area. When they are attempted, they are generally not well done. Overall, there appears to be confusion and a lack of knowledge of filing generally. Candidates' awareness of the differences between filing systems and classifications needs to be developed as does their knowledge of operating rules, indexing and electronic methods. At least on the topic of sources of information, the use and applications of the internet was generally well known.

The teaching points are:

- candidates should work through filing questions from past examination papers.
- more attention paid to introducing candidates to real-life situations involving filing methods and equipment.
- make sure that there are a range of reference sources/books available in the classroom.

Syllabus Topic Area 5: Office machinery

Candidates tend to do well in identifying office machines but do less well in describing the facilities on the machines, apart from photocopiers. The examination will state how many facilities are required. In the past, up to eight facilities of a photocopier has been required. Moreover, questions concerning the health and safety aspects of machinery are usually well attempted.

The teaching points are that candidates should:

- make bullet notes of the facilities of each of the machines named in the syllabus.
- It is important to know a number of facilities for each machine.
- emphasise to candidates the importance of reading whole questions, highlighting key words and planning answers, before commencing written answers in the examination.

Syllabus Topic Area 6: Internal and external communication

The writing of the memorandum and letters are generally well done and all the required points are covered. In writing letters, candidates are much better now at using the correct complimentary close to match the salutation. However, the tone of the letters could be improved. The duties of a telephonist/receptionist are generally well known but candidates often become confused between internal and external post. Moreover, the procedures for incoming mail are generally not well attempted.

The teaching points for the candidates are:

- practice the rules for incoming and outgoing mail in role-play situations.
- continue the practice of writing different types of letter.
- candidates should take care in identifying the sender, recipient and subject.

Syllabus Topic Area 7: Services provided by outside agencies

The question on the examination paper, usually question 9, for this syllabus topic is avoided by most candidates. This suggests that they might find it a difficult topic. Certainly, there is a lack of knowledge of post office services and banking methods of payments. In this connection, standing orders and direct debits are often confused as well as cheque crossings. However, cheque completion and knowledge on dishonoured cheques are well attempted.

The teaching points for the candidates are:

- greater use of the internet or use of post office leaflets describing post office services so that candidates have up-to-date knowledge.
- More work needed on showing how the banking methods of payments differ.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

Planning answers

The most frequent examiner comment is that there is very little evidence of candidates planning their answers. The time allocation is sufficient for candidates:

- to read all the questions thoroughly so that they can be understood
- to select the information necessary for the answer
- to organise the information sensibly
- to decide an appropriate format and layout for the answer
- to choose suitable vocabulary and grammatical structures
- to write the answer
- to check the answer for errors and to correct them.

It is emphasised that many candidates who fail do so not because of inadequate English but because of inadequate planning.

Organising information

In addition to the general approach to planning an answer that is given above, it is also helpful for candidates to remember that most types of business communication benefit from having:

- a beginning in which some form of introduction is given, possibly outlining the background or reason for the message
- a logically ordered middle section that gives the details of the information clearly and concisely
- an ending that closes the message by summing up the message very precisely or in some other way 'rounds off' the communication.

Changing the given vocabulary and grammatical structures

If candidates make definite, obvious attempts to use vocabulary and grammar appropriately and sensibly, occasional repetitions of given words and structures are expected and accepted.

What cannot be acceptable is an answer that is really a collection of phrases and sentences taken directly from the question and repeated without any additional thought, plan or form.

EXAMPLES OF CANDIDATE RESPONSES

The examples are taken from the Series 4 2006 question paper. The question is as follows

(a) State **SIX** details shown on a delivery note. (6 marks)

(b) (i) On an invoice you may see the following information:

Terms: 5% monthly
8% 7 days

What does this mean? (4 marks)

(ii) State **FOUR** pieces of information that would appear on an invoice. (4 marks)

(c) List the following documents in the order in which they would be used in a business transaction:

Credit note Order Invoice Statement of account Cheque Advice note
(6 marks)

The following answers were written by three candidates in response to this question.

Answer (a) shows a fail response.

Answer (b) shows a pass response.

Answer (c) shows a distinction response.

Answer (a) – fail response

(a) Date and time of delivery.

(bi) 5% every month
8% every 7 days

(bii) Date and how much it costs.

(c) credit note – invoice - order – cheque – advice note – statement of account

The answer has only two valid points, resulting in two marks out of twenty:

- the candidate would gain one mark for 'date' to part (a).
- one mark would be given for 'date' to part (bi).

However, there are many weaknesses. For example:

- the candidate was required to identify six details to part (a) but gave only two.
- no knowledge and understanding of trade terms to part (bi).
- the sequence for part (c) is virtually the one given in the question.

To reach the pass mark, answers must be reaching at least 8 marks per question.

Answer (b) – pass response

(a) The date. The name/address of buyer. The signature.

(bi) 5% monthly means that you need to pay within a month.
8% 7 days means that you need to pay within 7 days.

(bii) The name/address of buyer and the date.

(c) Invoice – advice note – invoice - credit note – cheque – statement of account.

There are still some limited points or incorrect answers including:

- need to mention that these were discounts to part (bi).
- only two, instead of four, pieces of information provided to part (bii).
- the use of the document 'invoice' twice to part (c).

However, the improvements compared with answer (a) are considerable. For example:

- this candidate gained 3 marks to part (a), two marks to part (bi), two marks to part (bii) and three marks to part (c). Therefore, giving a total mark of ten marks.
- the candidate uses a number of valid facts concerning commercial documents.
- the candidate has obviously some sound knowledge on commercial documents.

Answer (c) – distinction response

- (a) 1. The date
2. Order number
3. Number of items
4. Name and address of the buyer
5. Delivery address
6. Signature
- (bi) There will be 5% off the total invoice if paid within the month.
There will 8% cash discount if paid within 7 days.
- (bii) Four other pieces of information are:
1. Invoice number
 2. Date
 3. Sales order number
 4. E & OE
- (c) The order is as follows:
1. Order
 2. Advice note
 3. Invoice
 4. Credit note
 5. Cheque
 6. Statement of account

This is an excellent answer, scoring 18 out of 20 marks. The only error was in part (c) when the candidate incorrectly placed cheque before the statement of account.

- The required information was valid and relevant to all three question parts.
- It is well organised and structured answer.
- High level of knowledge and understanding on the topic of commercial documents.

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