

Level 2 Certificate in English for Business



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 September 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.

Article I. 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 80.86%

Grade distributions

Pass	23.76%
Credit	32.32%
Distinction	24.59%

GENERAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

General strengths of candidates

- formal layout of answers especially of:
 - answers requiring a memo
 - answers requiring a report
- selection of information
- answers to Question 2 – the letter
- appropriate tone setting in answers especially in
 - memos reprimanding staff
 - letters placating customers

General weaknesses of candidates

- lack of planning to answers
- retention of given, inappropriate vocabulary
- inaccuracy of grammatical structures
- insufficient attention to specific instructions and recommendations e.g.:
 - “Remember that in Question 3 you should use your own words whenever possible.”
 - “We prefer articles to be 4 or 5 paragraphs long.”

TEACHING POINTS BY SYLLABUS TOPIC

Comments and teaching points on syllabus topic areas

SYLLABUS TOPIC AREA 1

LETTER

It is clear that Centres have taught candidates the importance of letter writing even in a modern business-world of electronic forms of message.

Specific recommendations for improvement are that candidates need to:

- plan their answers.
(This is true of all answers but particularly so of LETTERS and LISTS)
- make certain that the content of the letter DIRECTLY ANSWERS the points raised in the incoming letter
- match the greeting and the close

Dear Sir/Madam/Sirs plus *Yours faithfully*
Dear Name plus *Yours sincerely*

SYLLABUS TOPIC AREA 2

LEAFLET

With the exception perhaps of answers to Question 3, the leaflet is often the weakest answer offered by candidates.

Often, candidates unsystematically “scatter” words directly taken from the question without trying to link the ideas or to form them into a coherent message. (Examples of this practice were given in last year’s English for Business Second Level Annual Review.) Such answers fail.

The teaching points for the candidates are:

- “Scattered” answers rarely answer the question adequately
- Full sentences are not always needed in leaflets and notices but there has to be a LOGICAL SEQUENCE to the message and the information given in the question will almost certainly need to be REWORDED and GROUPED logically.
- The purpose of the leaflet needs to be unambiguous. Candidates should bear in mind at whom the leaflet is aimed, what the intended outcome of the message is, and what their own reaction would be, if they received the leaflet. The following two simple questions may help them to judge their own answers: “Is the leaflet understandable?” “Does the leaflet make its points unmistakably?”

SYLLABUS TOPIC AREA 3

REPORT

This is a popular choice and the method of writing a report remains well taught and learned. The most frequent problem is failure to allocate the material adequately to the chosen headings.

All versions of the How To Pass book recommend the same format. Some teachers, quite correctly, say that other formats are now more current, for example the memo-style report. For EFB2 any report format is acceptable. However, the "Terms of Reference" style continues to be the format that is recommended. Once this format is learned, a report almost writes itself. The headings always need the same type of content.

The teaching points are:

- a report must be **STRUCTURED APPROPRIATELY**
- whichever format is used, candidates should know what material to **ALLOCATE** to the **HEADINGS**
- the recommended style is:

TITLE (simply and briefly summing up of the subject of the report)

TERMS OF REFERENCE (stating the subject of report, who wants it, and by when)

PROCEDURE/PROCEEDINGS (explaining how the data is collected)

FINDINGS (giving the 'bare' findings without comment on them)

CONCLUSIONS (offering an interpretation of the findings)

RECOMMENDATIONS (stating what should be done)

NAME of the person making the report

DATE on which the report is written.

SYLLABUS TOPIC AREA 4

ARTICLE

The article is not a popular choice. (Very occasionally Question 3 requires an article and then obviously there is no choice.) Some fairly basic problems appear such as sentence formation and paragraphing. (Some "article-answers" are discussed later in this review.)

The teaching points are:

- candidates are expected to be able to **FORM SENTENCES** adequately – subject plus verb etc
- paragraphing is also expected – not necessarily topic sentence type, but **EACH PARAGRAPH** should usually have a "theme" or "TOPIC"
- often the question asks for 4 to 5 paragraphs equating with the **COMMON PATTERN** of an introductory paragraph with 2 or 3 topic paragraphs and a final "sum up" paragraph.

SYLLABUS TOPIC AREA 5

LIST or STRUCTURED NOTES

This type of task is usually asked for in QUESTION THREE and it is always an exercise in

REFORMULATION and REWORDING.

The word LIST is intended to be read very loosely. Grouping of material, headings, sub-headings that are often associated with structured notes etc are welcome. Numbers, bullets etc can be useful tools.

The teaching points are that candidates should:

- make NOTES of the important statement from the passage. (Some candidates may benefit from being reminded that a “list of main points” from an article etc infers that the list will be shorter than the original!)
- ORGANISE the notes into a structure, possibly sets of grouped points
- REWORD the selected points appropriately
- CHECK the GRAMMATICAL CONSISTENCY of bulleted points etc.

SYLLABUS TOPIC AREA 6

MEMO

The memo is by far the most chosen option in Question 1 and its techniques are often well understood by candidates.

The teaching points are:

- a memo usually needs to be PARAGRAPHED
- a memo’s message should be SUCCINCT - “to the point” and brief without being terse.
- candidates should take care identifying the sender, recipient and subject
- the message of a memo needs to have a beginning, a middle and an end.

SYLLABUS TOPIC AREA 7

NOTICE

The comments and notes on how to approach a question asking for a notice to be written are identical to those for a leaflet

Sometimes, candidates unsystematically “scatter” words directly taken from the question without any attempt to link the ideas or to form them into a coherent message. Such answers fail.

The teaching points for the candidates are:

- “Scattered” answers rarely answer the question adequately
- Full sentences are not always needed in leaflets and notices but there has to be a LOGICAL SEQUENCE to the message and the information given in the question will almost certainly need to be REWORDED and GROUPED logically.

- The purpose of the notice needs to be unambiguous. Candidates should bear in mind at whom the notice is aimed, what the intended outcome of the message is, and how effective their notice would be in 'real life'. The following two simple questions may help them to judge their own answers: "Is the notice understandable?" "Does the notice make its points unmistakably?"

FURTHER GUIDANCE

Planning answers

The most frequent comment from examiners of EFB2 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 needed for the answer
- to decide an appropriate format and layout for the answer
- to organise the information logically
- 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 accepted is an answer that is really a collection of phrases and sentences taken directly from the question and repeated without little additional thought, plan or form.

EXAMPLES OF CANDIDATE RESPONSES

Examples of candidate responses

The examples are taken from the series 3 2008 question paper. The question is as follows:

*You work in a career advice centre. The 'Career Worker Digest', a specialist magazine for career advisers, has phoned and asked you to **write an article** for the magazine about what advice to give to people to improve their chances of getting the job that they want. The editor of the magazine says, "We prefer articles to be 4 or 5 paragraphs long."*

Here are some notes that you make:

RESEARCH – find information – general and about specific job.

If you haven't got a job – get work experience – volunteer to help etc. Don't sit around waiting for a job to 'come along'.

CONSIDER – a course – training – qualification.

Apply for jobs! Prepare for interview.

PERSEVERE – if you don't get one job – apply for another.

(I may want to add ideas for the article, and not use some of these.)

Candidates were asked to write the article.

The following is a genuine reproduction of what was written by a candidate as an answer to this question.

Answer A – fail level response

GET THE JOB I WANT

If you want a job research, and find infomation general and about specific job. General means about ordinary job specific means about special job. It is no matter. You need research for specific and general. You need know about job.

Nowsaday many people graduated from college and do not work. Are you idle? Don't sit around wait for job to come along. Get work experiance. Volunteer and help. Work it doing job. Work free! Who want idle guy and no experiance?

Improve chance of getting job they want. Research and find infomation. Training is good. Qualifcation is good. Consider with certificate. You want infomation and qualifcation to get good job.

If you don't get job. Persvere and apply another. You be lucky. Get another. Try get another one job. You are not idle guy.

Discussion of candidate answer A:

The answer has some good points.

- It makes some sense. There is a message.
- Some additions are made to the given vocabulary and phrases.
- Some of the additions are simple, but effective e.g. *Are you idle?*
- There is an attempt at effective closure: "You are not idle guy" linking with the earlier "Are you idle?" and "Who want idle guy ...?"
- As asked for, there are 4 paragraphs.

However, there are rather more weaknesses.

- The message is very halting and does not always communicate e.g. *Work it doing job ... Consider with certificate.*
- The sequence is virtually the one given in the question.
- There is heavy reliance on given words and phrases.
- Even copied words are sometimes misspelled: *experiance, qualifcation, infomation.*
- Some of the copying is inappropriate: *Improve chance of getting job they want.*
- There are several grammar faults, spelling errors and some lack of sentence recognition.

To reach the pass mark, answers must communicate the message more fluently, correctly, and with less reliance on given vocabulary etc.

Here is a further example of a candidate's answer to the same question.

Answer B – pass level response

I WANT A JOB

If you would like to have a job but you have not been employed yet. You should read this article before you send your application letter.

Firstly, you should do some research about all kind of job whatever general or specific and you should find out what your interest is. However, you can not choose the job because of its highly salary. After you have chose the job, you should consider why they would employ you, if you are suitable for it or not. If you do not, please prepare yourself by attending a English course or a course leading to a professional qualification, for example, Accounts and Information Technology

Thirdly, you should check your application letter has no error. You should proofread and if you do not know it is correct or not, you can ask for your college or university to help. When you are going to interview, you should assure your clothes are neat and tidy and no need to be colourfull, just plain colour is alright.

If you have not worked before, you should try to gain more experience, such as working for school or being a volunteer. Do not just sit home, try another one. I hope all of you will have a bright future.

Discussion of candidate answer B:

Answer B has several faults including:

- occasional lack of sentence recognition
- incorrect verb forms
- some phrasing and structure problems
- singular noun when plural required
- adverb use when adjective needed
- omission of 'link' words: e.g. "if"
- incorrect article use
- misspelling
- "assure" for "ensure"
- "Firstly" and "thirdly" but no "secondly" or "fourthly".
- a fairly weak final paragraph.

However, the improvements compared with answer A are considerable. For example:

- the expression of article is relatively fluent
- it easily communicates its message
- the facts are incorporated into a logical structure and sequence
- the candidate has obviously thought about the message and added ideas to make it more genuinely useable.

Here is a further example of a candidate's answer to the same question.

Answer C – distinction level response

Get that dream job!

“Although I have applied for many jobs recently, I cannot even get one job!” This sort of comment we can always hear from teenagers and adults. This is happening because they do not know the skills and techniques to make themselves stand out from other applicants. This article will tell you some of them.

Firstly, you need to find a job that you are able to meet all the requirements, such as qualifications, experience and personality. If you do not have the necessary qualifications, get them! Go to college. Find the courses that lead to the qualifications you need. Learn and gain knowledge.

Secondly, experience is almost as important sometimes as your certificates and diplomas. If you think you need more experience in working, you must find a way of gaining some. Look for related jobs and if you cannot get paid work, then offer yourself as an unpaid volunteer.

Thirdly, when you write an application letter to an employer, you must check carefully that there are no errors. This is very important because this is the first clue that an employer will get of a possible employee. It will give a poor impression of your potential, if your writing has a lot of mistakes.

Finally, if everything has gone well and you get that interview, you have nearly succeeded. Put the same effort into preparing for your interview as you did in getting it, and you have almost got your dream job. Arrive on time and look well-groomed. Show the interviewer respect but don't make the mistake of saying too little. What you say must be sensible and show that you are really interested in the job. If you keep quiet and just say “yes” and “no”, how can an interviewer discover your personality?

Follow my simple recommendations and wake up from your dream. I did!

Discussion of candidate answer C:

There are some areas that could be improved e.g.

- The pronoun “them” at the end of the first paragraph almost certainly refers to “skills and techniques” but is not fully clear.
- The structure of the first sentence of paragraph 2 is incorrect and awkward.

but, as a Second Level answer, it is excellent:

- The required information is expressed clearly
- It is generally well organised and structured.
- The word choice and phrasing are the candidate's own.
- The message and expression are appropriate to the task.
- The communication is clear and fluent.
- Some ‘high’ skills are shown: for example the changes in sentence formation in the second paragraph where short, staccato sentences strengthen the message, “Do something!” and the following more complex structures explain the instructions.
- “Dream” is used as the ‘running-thread’ in the article giving it cohesion and a ‘rounded’ structure.

Answer C is not perfect, but it is a distinction answer at English for Business Second Level.

EDI

International House
Siskin Parkway East
Middlemarch Business Park
Coventry CV3 4PE
UK

Tel. +44 (0) 8707 202909
Fax. +44 (0) 2476 516505
Email. enquiries@ediplc.com
www.ediplc.com



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