

## Level 3 Certificate in English for Business



International  
Qualifications from EDI

### Annual Qualification Review

2008



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## INTRODUCTION

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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.

## 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            86.60%

Grade distributions

Pass	29.00%
Credit	39.37%
Distinction	18.15%

## GENERAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

### Strong Candidates

- demonstrated a high level of accuracy in written English
- spent time reading the information given to ensure there was full understanding
- were able to use an appropriate business layout for the documents
- selected information from that given and organised this to fit the requirements of the questions
- adopted a style appropriate to the needs of the recipients
- allocated time to make final proof reading of the documents to identify errors

### **Weaker candidates**

- gained low marks for “mechanics” by making many errors in English. This was often the result of attempting to produce complex sentences rather than adopting a concise, businesslike style
- used inappropriate layout for the documents
- showed little appreciation of the communication aspects of the questions and did not adopt an appropriate tone or style
- made poor decisions about selecting relevant material
- copied large sections of the question paper verbatim
- allocated a disproportionate time to some questions and were not able to complete the paper

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## TEACHING POINTS BY SYLLABUS TOPIC

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There are eight syllabus topics.

- 1 Composing a business letter
- 2 Drafting an internal report
- 3 Business-related text comprehension
- 4 Business-related text and data conversion and reformulation
- 5-8 Linguistic competence

Topics 5 – 8 are tested in each question. The other topics are tested in turn by 4 questions. All questions are compulsory.

### Syllabus Topic 1: Letter

Candidates are given a role and a context. They must then produce a business letter which could initiate communication with someone or could respond to communication already received. It is always assumed that headed notepaper is used so candidates do not have to design letterheads, but all other components of the layout of a business letter should be used.

The teaching points for candidates are:

- in a business letter, the salutation and close must be in agreement, the name and job title of the writer should be given after the signature and the letter should be dated and headed
- candidates must give careful thought to the style and tone of the letter, eg a letter of complaint can be more forceful than a letter of apology following a complaint
- the instructions given by someone about the letter might include asides or confidential remarks that should not be included in the letter
- “what happens next” should be clearly stated or implied; this could be that a response is expected or that no further communication is required

### Syllabus Topic 2: Internal Report

Responses to this question vary. A significant factor is the adoption of an appropriate layout. At this level, there is not a prescribed format but all reports must include headings and subheadings if necessary under which the selected and gathered information is grouped. What is most important is that the recipient or reader can access the information and refer to relevant sections when necessary.

Candidates must also ensure that the headings are appropriate. Sometimes the candidate is not required to make recommendations; the report could assist someone else to do so, eg, Board of Directors. However, when recommendations are required, these should be clearly stated and specific. A recommendation such as “photocopying costs should be reduced” is not helpful, but “staff should be given a specific photocopying allocation” is clear and specific.

The teaching points are:

- the report should be fit for the purpose for which it is intended

- the report should be clearly structured under appropriate headings
- the traditional headings (eg Terms of Reference, Procedure, Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations) are not always the most appropriate for an internal report but some of these might be helpful, particularly conclusions and recommendations
- it is **never** appropriate to copy large amounts of the information given; this should always be summarised and put into own words
- information under headings could be in full sentences or short points providing a consistent style is used throughout the report.

### **Syllabus Topic 3: Comprehension**

Candidates with weak English skills find this the most testing question. They are required to read some complex text and then produce answers to questions on this. The text contains information of a business or commercial nature but candidates with no previous knowledge of the topic are not at a disadvantage. All information required is included in the text, although there is often one question in which candidates are asked to give an opinion or judgement on one of the issues raised in the text.

The teaching points for candidates are:

- candidates should read the text carefully, more than once if necessary, to ensure there is a complete understanding before the questions are attempted
- candidates' responses should use own words as far as possible, with the exception of specific points that cannot be paraphrased (eg names, proper nouns, numbers etc)
- the mark allocations for each question should be considered when answers are produced; marks can vary from two to five and this gives a suggestion as to the length of answer required.

### **Syllabus Topic 4: Reformulation**

This question often requires a memo to be produced but in a recent series paper a notice was also required. The purpose of the question is for the candidate to consider information given for one purpose and convert it into a document used for a different purpose.

The teaching points for candidates are:

- this question more than any other requires a careful consideration of the style and tone of the communication, which takes into account the position and needs of the recipient
- memo structure is very simple; the memo requires the headings **To, From, Date** and **Subject**
- any second document produced might include similar information to the first but in a different style, or different information might have to be selected
- if the second document is a notice, some attention must be paid to its appearance and visual style.

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## **FURTHER GUIDANCE**

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- It is accepted that there can be cultural differences in various parts of the world, eg in the level of politeness and extended courtesy of a letter. As long as a consistent approach is adopted, this is acceptable.
- Candidates are allowed to produce answers by means of a word processor. However, any typographical errors made are penalised.
- Americanised spelling (eg “colour” for “color”) is accepted as long as it is adopted consistently throughout the paper.

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## EXAMPLES OF CANDIDATE RESPONSES

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For Series 4 2007, Question 3, a passage on Psychometric Testing was provided. Eight questions were then asked on this with marks varying from 2 to 4.

Question 3a was:

“Describe what is meant by psychometric testing” (4 marks).

A **Distinction** level response would clearly include four points, such as follows.

“These are carefully and scientifically devised tests where the job roles are fully analysed so measurement can be made of the candidates’ suitability for a post”. This response would gain maximum marks.

The following response would gain two marks.

“This is non-subjective test of a candidates’ suitability for a job, the job is measured and candidates are tested for it.”

There are issues over the lack of articles, the apostrophe is misplaced in candidates’ and the candidates are measured rather than the job. However, a good attempt has been made to paraphrase objective (non-subjective) and the basic idea of assessing the job and measuring the candidates’ against this for suitability is given, so this is a very borderline “pass” response.

Candidates rarely gain no marks for such questions unless either inappropriate sections of the original text are selected, or the English is totally unreadable, such as this response:

“There is a compelling case for psychometric testing [copied but not relevant] Tests are fairly and random selection but cynical view is taken” [garbled and meaningless]

## EXAMPLES OF CANDIDATE RESPONSES

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

### QUESTION 1

#### Situation

You are employed by the Vortex Agency in the city of Northville, a company which organises holidays for its customers in the area. The company finds the most appropriate holiday for customers and then liaises with the holiday company to make the arrangements.

The company is managed by Mr David Stein. This morning, Mr Stein gives you the following letter from a customer.

29 River Street  
Northville  
NB4 6TY

(date)

Dear Sir or Madam

Recent Cruise "Latin American Delights"

You recently organised a cruise for my family. We toured parts of South America and the Caribbean from (dates) on the cruise ship Hypolita.

We have enjoyed many cruises previously and we decided to book this one because it gave us the opportunity to visit the city of De Gozolo. We have visited many of the other ports of call on the cruise previously but we have never visited the country of Hospitia previously so we were looking forward to visiting De Gozolo, its capital city.

Unfortunately, as we approached De Gozolo, the ship appeared to come to a halt suddenly and the captain announced that it was unsafe for us to visit De Gozolo. Not only that, but he also announced that we would now have to take a different route to our next destination, Santo Christophe. Eventually we arrived in Santo Christophe many hours later than scheduled and we were not able to make the visit to the summit of Mount Christophe which was advertised as one of the highlights of the tour.

Under the circumstances, I am sure that you would wish to offer us some compensation. To be fair, the Hypolita was an excellent ship and we enjoyed the rest of the cruise very much. However, as we missed two major highlights we feel that a refund is appropriate.

Yours faithfully

**Felicity Lee**  
Felicity Lee (Mrs)

Mr Stein says this to you.

*"I'm always sorry when I hear about an unhappy customer. To be honest, the cruise that Mrs Lee booked for her family wasn't inexpensive. It was a luxury cruise on a top cruise liner.*

*"I'd like you to respond to Mrs Lee, please. You'd better let her know that really this is not our responsibility. Once the booking is made, any issues are the responsibility of the cruise company. But between ourselves, I don't want to lose Mrs Lee as a customer – she spends a lot of money with us! So do your best to apologise. It won't do any harm to offer a small reduction on her next holiday but not more than 10% or we'll not make much profit!*

*"I know that there was some sort of revolution in Hospitia during this cruise, but please check on the details. Could you also check on why the ship was delayed in the next port? I'm not sure why this was the case."*

*You contact the owners of the Hypolita who point out that it is in the contract that all passengers sign that the company cannot guarantee that it will always make its advertised calls. There can be many reasons why this is not possible usually connected with the weather. The owners indicate that if Mrs Lee contacted them they would only offer an explanation and no compensation in this case. They tell you that the ship was approaching De Gozolo when it heard that there was fighting in the streets following political unrest. The government advised that it was not safe for anyone to land in Hospitia and advised the ship to leave Hospitia's coastal waters immediately. To do this, a detour was involved which delayed the arrival in Santo Christophe.*

*You mention this to Mr Stein who says. "OK, that sounds reasonable. I'm sure Mrs Lee isn't interested in the politics of Hospitia, but make sure you stress that all actions were taken for safety reasons. She might feel better if she knows that her family could have been in danger if they'd gone ashore in De Gozolo."*

## **Task**

**Write the letter** as requested. You can assume that your company's headed notepaper is used.

**(25 marks)**

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

Answer (a) shows a distinction response.

Answer (b) shows a pass response.

Answer (c) shows a fail response.

**Answer (a) distinction response**

**QUESTION 1**

HEADED PAPER

19 June 2008

Mrs Felicity Lee  
29 River Street  
Northville  
NB4 6TY

Dear Mrs Lee

**“Latin American Delights” Cruise**

Thank you for your letter. I was sorry to hear that you were disappointed with some aspects of this cruise. I know you have now enjoyed a number of holidays that we have organised for you and you will realise that sometimes holidays are affected by circumstances beyond our control.

I should also say that any issue concerning this cruise are really the responsibility of the owners of the cruise ship, Hypolita. However, on this occasion I am pleased to investigate the complaint of such a regular customer as yourself.

I am sure you will be aware that various factors can affect the advertised itinerary of a cruise ship. This is clearly stated in the booking conditions. In this case, the problem was the uncertain political situation in Hospitia and, in particular, the threat of unrest in the city of De Gozolo. On such occasions, the safety of the passengers is paramount and the ship’s captain, on the advice of our government, made the decision not to land. He was also advised to leave the coastal waters of Hospitia by the quickest route, which unfortunately meant severe delays before he could proceed to the next port of call, Santo Christophe.

I was very glad that you enjoyed your cruise otherwise and I hope that these exceptional circumstances do not prevent you from making further bookings with the Vortex Agency.

Please feel free to visit us to discuss your future requirements and in view of your disappointment, I am prepared to offer you a 10% reduction on the price of the next holiday you book with us.

Yours sincerely

**A Candidate**

A Candidate  
(Customer Services Department)

This answer is excellent in many respects.

- It follows conventional letter layout.
- The material is well selected.
- The letter is then well structured in a logical manner.
- The English is accurate and fluent.
- The writer adopts a diplomatic tone and handles the offer of compensation in a sensitive way.
- The recipient, Mrs Lee would be very satisfied to receive this.

## Answer (b) pass response

Felicity Lee  
17 Bank Street  
Northville NB4 3MA

5 June 2008

Dear Madam

Thank you for your letter of 3 June. I am pleased that you are writing to us and I will do my best to explain reasons of the incident you and your family experienced during the recent cruise.

The reason why the ship didn't arrive to the city of De Gozolo was riots in the streets and an unstable political situation in the region. Furthermore the captain was advised by the local authorities to leave Hospitia's waters as soon as possible. The ship had to make a detour and finally reach Santo Christophe, with a significant delay.

The cruise company is obliged to stick to the safety regulations and in some circumstances may change the schedule of trips. Vortex Agency cooperates with a number of travel operators that organises holidays for our customers. Thus we are not directly responsible for incidents that may take place during holidays. However, safety and comfort of our customers is for us the most important, so we are working hard to prevent any unpleasant situation.

I would like to apologise you and your family for any inconvenience you experienced. As compensation we are offering a 10% reduction for your holiday.

I hope you enjoy many cruises with us in the future.

Yours sincerely

A. Candidate

Customer Services Manager.

There are some faults.

- The layout does not follow letter conventions. There is no agreement between the salutation and close and no heading.
- Mrs Lee's address is incorrect.
- There are some errors in expression and sentence structure.
- The third paragraph ends in a confused manner.

In general, however, this is a "mailable" letter and obtained a pass mark.

**Answer (c) fail response.**

05.05.08

Dear Mrs Felicity Lee,

Thank you for your letter. We are anxious for providing for our customers as fine holidays as possible. Therefore, we are grateful for any information, which can improve our our services.

First of all, we are extremelly sorry for all inconvinience and dissatisfaction caused by change of the schedule. However, the turn to different from De Gozolo destination and longer travel to Santo Christophe were reasonable. Durring your cruise to De Gozolo, fights on the streets have occurred. The captain of your's cruise liner have changed the shedule following the goverment advice. It was unsafe to visit the city.

As a compensation, we offer you a 10% discount for your next holiday.

We look forward to provide you entertainment again.

Yours sincerely,

A. Candidate

Assistan to the Manager of the company.

There are some adequate areas.

- There is an attempt to be courteous and sympathetic.
- The opening and closing sentences are appropriate.
- Some sentences are constructed correctly, despite many errors in grammar and spelling.

However, this letter could not be used in the real setting.

- There are many errors in spelling.
- There are grammatical flaws over the use of articles, the tense and person of verbs and punctuation, including the use of the apostrophe.
- Many key facts are missed (eg the terms of the contract, the importance of the safety of the passengers, the reason for the delay in Santo Christophe)
- The 10% deduction on the next bill is not compensation but a gesture of goodwill to a regular customer.



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