

Preliminary Certificate in English for Business



International
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Annual Qualification Review

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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.

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 69.07%

Grade distributions

Pass 11.34%

Credit 22.68%

Distinction 35.05%

GENERAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

TEACHING POINTS BY SYLLABUS TOPIC

There are 10 syllabus topics which are integrated into three sections of the paper. These topics are as follows:

- 1 Basic office or place of work descriptions
- 2 Basic job roles in a work context
- 3 Basic social language in a business context
- 4 Basic work or business-related instructions and directions
- 5 Simple numerical information
- 6 Standard business or work-related messages
- 7 Linguistic competence - structures
- 8 Linguistic competence - concepts
- 9 Linguistic competence - vocabulary
- 10 Linguistic competence - functions

Section A concentrates on topics 1 and 2. Section B on topics 3 and 4. Section C all topics. Topics 7 – 10 are covered mainly in section B and C.

Section A

This section includes a picture. Candidates then answer 15 Multiple Choice questions followed by 10 short answer questions.

This is usually the best answered section. Specific recommendations are that candidates consider the following:

- for the multiple choice questions candidates consider which is the best answer to each question. This might not be the only conceivable answer, but one answer will always be the most appropriate
- for the short answer questions, candidates should not produce full sentences. Whilst they are not penalised for this, it is unnecessary and time-wasting

Teaching points for the candidates are:

- all responses should be clear and specific
- the short answers should clearly relate to the questions, eg an answer to a “who is eating?” could be “Nobody” or “No-one”. “No” or “None” do not follow grammatically
- numbers can be in words or figures

Section B

In this section here is a short dialogue between two people in a business setting. It can be a telephone conversation or a face to face conversation. Candidates then answer eleven True or False questions and then answer eight questions in full sentences, all based on the conversation.

Teaching points for the candidates are:

- only one of True or False should be selected
- the sentences produced must be complete and grammatically correct. For example, a question "What is Anna's job?" requires an answer such as "She is a secretary to the Managing Director". "Secretary" is not sufficient
- candidates cannot copy parts of the dialogue successfully and should demonstrate their understanding by using their own words
- all variations of names are acceptable (eg full names, "John Smith", first name only, surname with title, "Mr Smith". Pronouns are accepted if the sense is clear to whom or what they refer
- it is never required that more than one sentence is produced
- as in Section A, some questions will produce negative responses. Non existence responses might be required (eg "No one is speaking on the telephone".)

Section C

In this section, the dialogue from Section B is used as a basis for a piece of productive writing. Candidates are then given information (eg a timetable or price list) which they consult to select information to complete a message which they give to a third party.

Specific recommendations are that the candidates consider the following:

- this is a reading as well as a writing exercise. Candidates should read all information given carefully and ensure that this is fully understood before any writing is produced

Teaching points for candidates are:

- the document produced, usually a memo or a message, should be produced in a clear and consistent style
- candidates should consider the relative position of the sender and receiver and use an appropriate style
- the information should be put into a logical order
- only relevant information should be included in the message (eg the conversation often includes some basic greetings or expressions of gratitude. Rarely are these necessary in the message)
- the additional information will always be required for a suitable answer to be produced but only relevant points should be selected

FURTHER GUIDANCE

Candidates are neither rewarded nor penalised for good or poor handwriting. However, candidates should attempt to produce legible answers to all questions. If they know their handwriting is not good, avoiding using “joined up” handwriting will often result in responses that are easier to read. However, candidates should avoid writing in upper case letters only as they are being tested on their ability to use upper and lower case letters correctly.

If candidates realise that they have answered a question incorrectly they should cross through the incorrect answer and write the correct one clearly. Liquid paper should not be used.

Candidates should be able to remove the picture from the answer book and then be able to consult this directly when answering questions in Section A.

For short answer and full sentence answers, it is accepted that correct answers could be represented in different ways. For example, if a question asked the time, a correct answer could be “Three o’clock”, “15.00”, “3 pm” etc).

EXAMPLES OF CANDIDATE RESPONSES

In the Series 4 2007 paper, Section B gave a conversation where a painter asks an office supervisor to seek the opinions of her staff on what colour the office should be repainted. In Section C the preferred colours of the 11 staff members were given. Light blue was the most popular colour. A message that the supervisor (Nicola) could give to the painter (John) was the task of Section C. Nicola is asked to provide some information about the room, also.

The following answers were given 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

MEMO	
TO: John	Date: 7 November 2007
From: Nicola	
Subject: Painting in the Office	
We are very pleased that your staff will paint our office on Thursday of next week. I have spoken to my staff and the most popular colour is light blue.	
As you requested I can tell you that there are four doors and three windows in the office. We would also like to ask if you could make sure that all furniture is covered before your staff paint the office.	
Thank you.	

This response is accurate, comprehensive, clear and polite.

Answer b

MEMO	
TO: John	Date: 7 November 2007
From: Nicola	
Subject: Painting	
Thank you for your painting our office next Thursday. I speak to my colleges and most preffer light blue. Four doors and Three Windows are in the office. You must cover all furniture before you paint.	

The main points are included but the first sentence is not grammatically correct and "colleagues" and "prefer" are misspelled. There are no paragraphs and the style is terse; it is brusque and although not impolite, it would not be well received by John. However, the basic message is acceptable.

Answer c

MEMO

TO: Nicola
From: Supervisor

Date: Thursday

Subject: John

The office needs to be repainted. We can choose any colour. We can choose from six colours. I likes light blue. None wants Grey. It will be nice to work in a smart office again.

Yours sincerely

The supervisor

Much of this is copied from the conversation and is not relevant to the task. Much is missed (eg the points about the room and covering the furniture) and the only original text contains errors with the verbs.

No subject is given, the date is non specific and the "To" and "From" are confused and incorrect.

This memo could not be used.

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