

BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL

Paper 8299/5161

Business Organisation and Environment

General comments

The examination raised a number of issues:

- (i) Invigilators are advised to read the information on the front page out aloud to candidates so there is no question of misunderstanding how they should proceed.
- (ii) Candidates must read both the case study and the accompanying tasks carefully. They must ensure that they understand precisely what the Examiner wants them to do. Candidates often fail to do themselves justice simply because they either misread or fail to comprehend a task. The invigilator must emphasise that 15 minutes' reading time is provided in order to help candidates become acquainted with the contents of the examination paper.
- (iii) An expectation of the case study is that candidates will respond in *the* appropriate context. This means that, unless the task calls for general business knowledge, answers should be clearly related to the case study. Marks are often lost because the context is disregarded. It is not enough to display knowledge and teachers should ensure that their candidates understand the importance of context. To reinforce this point, some candidates gave excellent answers to the 4 mark tasks in this examination paper but could earn no more than 3 marks owing to the lack of context. The loss of even a few marks in this way could prohibit a candidate from getting a better grade.
- (iv) Candidates must appreciate that a short and focused answer is preferable to one that is lengthy and offers little substance. They need to differentiate between the demands of different value tasks. There is little to be gained from writing a detailed answer to a 2 mark task and then giving very little attention to one offering 4 marks. At no point in the examination paper are candidates required to submit detailed essay-type answers but they must write sufficient detail to demonstrate to the Examiner that they understand the tasks.
- (v) Candidates are mostly asked to *describe* or *explain*, and a typical failing is an insufficiency of description or explanation. The majority of candidates sit the examination in a second language and incorrect spelling and grammatical errors are not taken into consideration. The demonstration of business knowledge and, where required, the evidence of reasoning, is much more important than the quality of written language. However, it must be emphasised that very poorly expressed answers, especially those which expect the Examiner to guess a candidate's meaning and intention, may not be marked very favourably.
- (vi) Candidates must not underestimate the importance of time management. The evidence indicates that all the tasks are completed within the allotted time. It is appreciated that an examination will put candidates under pressure but teachers need to instruct them on how to pace themselves and not panic because of the time constraint.
- (vii) Layout of responses still needs attention but mostly scripts seem to be better presented. Unclear or untidy scripts can present Examiners with unnecessary difficulties. No marks are deducted from scripts where candidates ignored advice about, for example, leaving margins clear, or starting each task on a separate sheet of paper, but teachers and candidates must acknowledge that these instructions have a purpose.

- (viii) Unfortunately poor examination technique remains an issue and still hinders the achievement of higher marks for many candidates. Teachers are strongly advised to address the subject when preparing their candidates for the examinations. Previous examination papers and the Principal Examiner reports are readily available and it is recommended that they are used during the revision period.
- (ix) There are still candidates who insist on copying out the tasks and wasting their valuable examination time. Weaker candidates often answer tasks by copying out segments of the case study in which case they fail to earn marks.

Comments on specific tasks

The focus of the case study was Lucky Charm Gifts Ltd. Over 20 years the company had grown from a sole trader business operating a rented kiosk in a market to a limited company owning several shops and kiosks, a warehouse and a workshop. The chosen market was the souvenir business in which the owner and main shareholder, Ayesha, had been very successful. The responses to the tasks needed to take into account the nature, objectives, and features of the business.

Task 1

- (a) Ayesha said that turning Lucky Charm Gifts into a private company had given her some advantages over being a sole trader. Candidates were asked to suggest two features of a private company which gave her those advantages. Candidates were expected to identify those features which were specifically in the context of both case study and task and not to give features of a limited company. This meant that references to, for example, the transferability of shares and the lack of compulsion to publish accounts were considered irrelevant and not awarded marks. The main points to discuss were that the limited company:

- had limited liability
- could continue in perpetuity
- enjoyed the status of an artificial legal person
- could still be controlled by Ayesha as its sole director

Mostly the features identified were limited liability and perpetuity although it was also suggested that capital was easily raised and the responsibility for running the business was shared. Neither of these latter points was considered particularly strong nor applicable.

- (b) This task called upon candidates to explain three of Ayesha's business objectives.
- (i) The first objective was to provide employment. The text said that the business operated in areas of high unemployment and clearly it provided a lifeline to some people. Many candidates suggested that Ayesha acted altruistically in wanting to give jobs to the unemployed. However, the objective was much simpler than that because Ayesha recognised that no business could survive without employees and their specialisms or skills. Few candidates were able to make that point. A significant number earned marks for suggesting that she might have received government grants for locating in deprived areas. Some responses strayed into the following task and spoke of the local standard of living.
- (ii) The second objective was to raise the local standard of living. Overall this task was quite well done as it recognised that even a few new employment opportunities would enable some families to enjoy a better life. Their increased expenditure would also help to employ others. Their better earnings meant the ability to pay taxes which in turn could bring benefits to their community. The connection with the foregoing task was well made.
- (iii) The third objective was to enlarge Ayesha's share of the market. Mostly candidates understood the objective, rightly pointing out that a larger share would mean higher turnover and possibly better profits too. Improved business might also mean more employment opportunities. Some responses were historical in the sense that the previous development of the company was discussed and, by implication, this objective had been achieved. The case study did not mention that Ayesha was satisfied with the size of her market share but it could have been assumed that further growth was possible.

- (c) This task asked for explanations of two financial terms.
- (i) The first was double-entry bookkeeping. The majority of candidates understood that every item of income or expenditure had to be recorded twice, once as a debit and once as a credit. Better answers said that the system ensured that assets equalled liabilities which ensured that the balance sheet always balanced.
 - (ii) The second was *bank reconciliation* and this term did not appear to be well understood. Many answers dealt with loans and borrowings from the bank instead of pointing out that when Lucky Charm Gifts received a bank statement it was checked against the firm's receipts and payments. The bank reconciliation helped to ensure that both the bank and business records were correct.

Task 2

- (a) Candidates were asked to explain three purposes of an organisation chart.
- (i) The first purpose was that it identified the channel of communication and the weaker responses confused this task with item (iii) below. The essential point here was that the chart indicated the route through which staff and managers communicated. It was organised on a top-down basis to allow Ayesha to issue orders but also bottom-up to permit feedback from employees.
 - (ii) The second purpose was that it indicated the span of control. Again there was some reference to (iii) below but mostly candidates understood that the span of control referred to the number of staff answerable to any one manager. Some explained the difference between wide and narrow spans. Ayesha had a wide span of control because she directed all the managers and outlets.
 - (iii) The third purpose was that it showed the levels of authority. Candidates were comfortable with this task and explanations clearly stated that the chart indicated to whom employees were responsible, who had authority and their positions, and the posts held by the employees.
- (b) Lucky Charm Gifts was a centralised business. Candidates were asked to identify one advantage and one disadvantage of centralisation to Lucky Charm Gifts Ltd. Explanations were fairly predictable and dull but at least the candidates understood the basic issues. The main advantage identified was that Ayesha was able to maintain strict control over the business but the explanation needed to be refined to include the promotion of the company's image, reputation and policy. The main disadvantage of centralisation was readily recognised as being likely to reduce initiative within the business along with the risk that managers could become demoralised.
- (c) The case study explained that Ayesha has agreed to appoint a non-executive director. Candidates had two tasks to complete in this regard.
- (i) Candidates were asked to explain a non-executive director. There were a few candidates who knew the answer but generally the responses were either incomplete or wrong. It has been noted before that tasks relating to directors are invariably handled weakly. The point most understood was that a non-executive director would not be employed by Lucky Charm Gifts and as such had no day-to-day involvement. Most candidates thought that the director would be a shareholder, which was not unlikely, when the most probable explanation was that s/he would be invited to join the Board because of expertise or the representation of a stakeholder e.g. the bank.
 - (ii) The next task called for the suggestion of a benefit to Lucky Charm Gifts of appointing a non-executive director to the Board. Most responses were weak and tended to follow the case study's comment that the director would strengthen the Board. What was really required was an acknowledgement that not being directly involved in the business meant that the non-executive director was more likely to be independent and could offer unbiased advice – in other words, the director could bring an 'outside view' and different perspective to Board discussions.

Task 3

- (a) Candidates were asked to describe three expectations that the employees might reasonably have had of their employer.
- (i) The first of these expectations dealt with training. Overall candidates dealt well with this task but tended to concentrate on the benefit to the business i.e. training helped to make employees more productive and cost effective, and that some roles within Lucky Charm Gifts were specialist and staff needed training to fulfil them. However, there was the personal aspect to consider in that training would give employees job satisfaction and help them to achieve better earnings and possibly promotion. This latter point was the more important expectation.
 - (ii) The second expectation concerned financial and non-financial incentives. What was required here was some reason for incentives along with some appropriate examples. Mostly the candidates correctly identified incentives but added wages and salaries which, in the main, do not have any lasting effect as incentives. Many rightly saw incentives as rewards for good work and to encourage loyalty to the business.
 - (iii) The third expectation was fair treatment. There were three types of response here: the first referred to all staff being treated exactly the same with no favouritism; the second dwelt on matters of health and safety; and the third focused correctly on the absence of gender, age and racial discrimination. The main points to have developed were about negative discrimination and also that management should not display unreasonable behaviour towards the employees. An answer could have been refined with reference to the existence of a system to deal with internal disputes.
- (b) The case study explained that the company supported job-sharing. Candidates were asked to explain what job-sharing meant and to identify one benefit it gave the employees. Job-sharing should have been explained as one full-time job undertaken by two people who split the working week (or other suitable time period) between them (mostly on a 50:50 basis) with each employee being paid pro-rata. A common error was to confuse it with shift work and/or to suggest that the system meant a job was completed faster.

The benefit to be identified was to the employee not to the employer; some candidates overlooked that distinction. Generally, the candidates suggested the system best suited working mothers since they could work and still attend to domestic responsibilities. Essentially job-sharing enabled an employee to be economically active and contribute to Ayesha's company on a part-time basis while having time to pursue other interests, like studying, or meeting other responsibilities. Indeed, it also offered the chance to do another but different part-time job.

- (c) Like most companies these days, Lucky Charm Gifts Ltd made use of computer technology. Candidates were asked to suggest two ways in which Ayesha was likely to use computers in her business. This task could be applied to almost any business and general responses were acceptable. Candidates experienced no real difficulty in responding to this task. Uses could have been drawn from e.g. accounts, staffing or HRM records, payroll, production of souvenirs, stock control, ordering of supplies and email links between each branch. Each use just needed a sentence to explain how it could be applied.

Task 4

- (a) Every business is affected in some way by PEST or external factors and candidates were asked to explain how the Lucky Charm Gifts company might be influenced by three specific factors.
- (i) The first factor was taxation. Responses tended to treat tax and its affect on Ayesha negatively i.e. tax as a disincentive and how it reduced company profits. Certainly any increase in business taxes might have meant increasing prices or reducing pay rises. However, tax could have offered Ayesha an incentive regarding her enterprise e.g. tax holidays, allowances for investment, lower tax threshold.
 - (ii) The second factor was competition and this task was answered quite well as candidates clearly understood the term but even so a lot of good answers ignored the context. Candidates were entitled to assume that the souvenir market was active and competitive.

Many responses suggested competition was healthy as it kept companies alert and it would encourage Ayesha to offer new products or to revise her pricing structure. On the other hand, aggressive competition could result in lower turnover and profits, job losses, even the sale of outlets; and, at its worse, the closure of the business.

- (iii) The third factor was the law regarding the employment of staff. The essence of this task was that a change in the law might make employment of staff more expensive because of, for example, legislation limiting the working week or the payment of a national minimum wage. Mostly candidates focused on health and safety issues and working conditions and these points were not acceptable. The main weakness here was the lack of application to Lucky Charm Gifts.
- (b)
- (i) This task asked candidates to address the factors which decided the location of Lucky Charm Gifts shops. The first factor was Ayesha's access to the market. This task seemed to defeat most attempts despite the text stating that the shops were located in tourist areas. The clue was clear. Ayesha's outlets catered for the tourist trade so they needed to be positioned in those areas where tourist traffic was heavy. Ideally, those areas needed to be provided with appropriate attractions to bring in the tourists. Candidates could have assumed that Ayesha's outlets would have been part of the tourist trail.
 - (ii) The next factor was the supply of labour. The answers to this obvious task were mostly disappointing. Again the clue was given quite clearly in the text. Despite being located in tourist areas that did not mean that employment was high, quite the contrary as far as the case was concerned. Ayesha should have been able to draw upon a ready supply of suitable labour for her business i.e. there ought to have been several applicants for each job meaning that Ayesha was able to select appropriate personnel. In the main these points were missed by the candidates.

Task 5

- (a) Ayesha said that her company was trading in a 'chosen market' and candidates were asked to clarify what she meant by that. It was clear that few candidates understood the term. However, there were some firm responses pointing out that Ayesha had made a positive choice to enter the market of tourist related products. Generally there may have been some confusion with **Task 4(b)(i)** above as the term 'market' was erroneously interpreted as a specific place. The feature of a chosen market is that Ayesha was able to get to know customer requirements, develop product lines and build a reputation.
- (b) Ayesha claimed that her company had got the right balance in its marketing mix. This task called for an explanation of three elements of the marketing mix. Many candidates seemed to ignore the fact that they were not asked for a general explanation of the marketing mix and the main failure here was the lack of application to the case.
- (b)
- (i) The first component of the marketing mix was price. The point that Ayesha operated a dual pricing system occurred to some candidates i.e. that she was using discriminatory pricing when selling to both foreign tourists as well as locals. The price should also have reflected the nature of the product and its quality. A number of candidates chose to write about the different pricing systems available to a business without really focusing on the case.
 - (ii) The next one was product. Some responses did not even mention the product or product group i.e. souvenirs or mementos of the country and pieces of local artwork. Ayesha was selling proven popular lines and the success of her business indicated that she offered the right goods at the right price in the right place. Overall, this task was not well done.
 - (iii) The last component was promotion and generally the point candidates made was that Ayesha should choose the appropriate media to sell her souvenirs without actually identifying any one medium. Many picked up the point in the case study about her advertisements in tourist guides and brochures but significant promotional means like attractive shop layouts and in-store events were omitted.

- (c) The final task asked for an explanation of what Ayesha meant when she talked of a good customer relations policy. There was a clear understanding that Ayesha wanted to satisfy her customers with good quality products but it wasn't acknowledged who the customers were. Candidates suggested that the purpose of the policy was to encourage repeat sales overlooking the fact that Ayesha sold to tourists who were unlikely to return to the area. Ideally the policy should have contained e.g. how staff should treat customers, how any complaints and problems were dealt with, selling in more than one currency, sending purchases overseas, and acceptance of credit cards. Rather than identifying this essential issue, most candidates talked around the subject.

BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL

Paper 8928/5162

Effective Business Communication

General Comments

Candidates are given 2 hours plus 15 minutes reading time to complete the examination, this time should be used to its maximum effect. Tasks are based on the case study, and it should be read carefully before reading the tasks. This should give an overall picture of what is required. Candidates should make sure that they allocate enough time to answer all the tasks in full and that they also leave about five to ten minutes at the end to read over their answers.

Centres should ensure that the syllabus is covered, that students practice on past papers and are familiar with the 'language' and terminology of the subject. Effective communication is a practical subject which should be part of a candidate's everyday life. It is, therefore, important to teach it in a practical and meaningful way that is relevant to the candidates' work and life.

There were many examples of not reading the case study or the tasks carefully, misinterpreting information, and misunderstanding the requirements of the tasks. These cost candidates valuable marks which can, and often do, make the difference of a grade.

Task 1

Candidates on the whole found this task difficult to answer. There was a general lack of understanding in the majority of answers. Candidates must learn to differentiate between reasons or causes and consequences. For example in part (a) of this task candidates wrote about the role of stakeholders and not why it was important to communicate with them. Candidates should also be encouraged to read questions very carefully so that they identify key command words and phrases.

- (a) The task asked for reasons why it is important to communicate with key stakeholders. Many candidates identified and described consequences, which was not what was asked for. Another failing in this section was that many candidates wrote at length about the work done by accountants, lawyers and other professionals. In these cases credit was given for identification of these people as stakeholders.
- (b) Again as in (a) above, **reasons** were asked for, and for **two-way communication**. There were slightly better answers in this section, however, candidates tended to repeat the points made in (a).
- (c) This task called for evaluation – a higher order skill. Many candidates found great difficulty with this task, with many leaving it unanswered, which suggests that this part of the syllabus (Section 1.3) was not covered by some centres. Evaluation means to assess or appraise something in relation to some other criteria. In other words the candidates should be asking questions such as 'Was the communication effective? Did it work? How did it work? Did it achieve what the company wanted it to do?'

Answers should have included 'availability', 'cost effectiveness', 'appropriateness'. The reference to 'stakeholders' led some candidates to repeat what they had already written in previous sections.

Task 2

Candidates are losing too many marks on a task where there is an opportunity to gain full marks. Candidates must read the case study carefully and then the task, make rough notes, and identify what are the essential pieces of information before answering the task.

- (a) The general layout of the letter by a number of candidates was incorrect. Candidates must be aware of the following:
- (i) The letterhead and the inside address must have full, realistic addresses. 'GMCS China' is not sufficient neither is 'Biomedical Global China'.
 - (ii) The inside address should be addressed to an individual i.e. 'Mr.' or 'The Managing Director'.
 - (iii) The complementary close – 'Yours sincerely' or 'Yours faithfully' must match the salutation i.e. – 'Dear Mr.' ends with 'Yours sincerely' and 'Dear Sir' ends with 'Yours faithfully'
This was not done by many candidates. Centres must be mindful of this as candidates are losing marks unnecessarily.

The content of the letter was often muddled or very vague. The content must contain the following:

- (i) The purpose of the meeting
- (ii) Who will be attending
- (iii) Date, time and place of the meeting
- (iv) Travel and other arrangements

Please see appendix for exemplar material.

- (b) The layout of the memo was on the whole well done. Although a memo is a less formal method of communication than a letter, it must not be too informal. It must contain correct relevant information and carry a signature. Content, however, was a problem in the following areas:
- (i) The purpose and importance of the meeting
 - (ii) Date, time and place of the meeting.
 - (iii) A signature

These points were confused to the extent that examiners found it difficult to identify who was invited to the meeting, where the meeting was to be held and why their attendance was necessary.

Task 3

- (a) (i) The responses to this section were mixed. Many candidates identified the various types of body language but did not develop them, hence failing to get the additional marks on offer.
- (b) There was a problem with some candidates who failed to differentiate between formal and informal channels or were unable to give suitable examples. E-mail is not a formal method. If meetings and briefings were identified then '**formal**' should have preceded them for full marks. Virtual channels were identified but not explained in the context of the task.

Task 4

- (a) The task clearly asked for four characteristics of a successful meeting. Some candidates listed more than this but there was a maximum of two marks for each, one of which was for development. Although characteristics were identified in many cases, their importance was not explained.
- (b) Generally well answered with valid examples.

Task 5

- (a) A complicated task requiring much thought, with most candidates getting 8 – 10 marks. It was very pleasing to see the high quality, neatness, accuracy and the imaginative creation of the key to the various items of data in the vast majority of diagrams.
- (b) Many candidates correctly identified line graphs and tables with a correct explanation.

Appendix 1

COMPANY LETTERHEAD – THIS MUST HAVE THE NAME OF THE
COMPANY AND A FULL RELEVANT ADDRESS

← THE INSIDE ADDRESS – THE ADDRESS AND
NAME OF THE PERSON AND/OR COMPANY
RECEIVING THE LETTER

← DATE

← *SALUTATION: DEAR SIR/SIRS/MADAM/MR...

SUBJECT OF THE LETTER

PARAGRAPH ONE OF THE BODY OF THE LETTER

PARAGRAPH TWO OF THE BODY OF THE LETTER
(THERE CAN BE MORE)

← *COMPLEMENTARY CLOSE

← SIGNATURE

← NAME OF SENDER

*Salutation and complementary close must match

Appendix 2

COMPANY NAME OR LOGO ONLY	(1 mark)
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INTERNAL MEMORANDUM OR MEMO	(1 mark)
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TO	}	(1 mark)
FROM		

DATE	(1 mark)
------	----------

SUBJECT	(1 mark)
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*PARAGRAPH 1

*PARAGRAPH 2

SIGNATURE	(1 mark)
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Any four marks from six for layout = 4 marks
* Four marks for content = 4 marks

Appendix 3

Example

GENERAL MEDICAL CARE SERVICES
HEAD OFFICE HONG KONG COMPLEX SINGAPORE
TEL + 65 1234 5678

Mr
Managing Director
Biomedical Global Ltd
(rest of address...
.....)
Date

Dear Sir,

Re: Forthcoming meeting in Singapore

I have been asked by our Managing Director Mr..... to invite you and your Chairman to a preliminary meeting to discuss the purchase of your company Biomedical Global Ltd.

The meeting will take place on October 22 2008 at the Raffles Suite at the Hotel Grand Capthorne Waterfront, 392 Havelock Road, Singapore, at 10.30am.

I would be grateful if you would forward me your flight details in order that our representative can meet you at the airport.

Yours faithfully,

(signature)

P.A. to Managing Director

BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL

<p>Paper 8928/5163 Business Finance</p>

General comments

Overall the performance of candidates who sat the October 2008 examination paper was disappointing with many candidates producing vague answers to the tasks that had been set. Centres are urged to remind candidates of the need for precision when defining terms and the need to address all parts of the tasks. In doing so, the candidates will increase their chances of scoring higher marks. There is also a need for candidates to manage their time more effectively and Centres should instruct their candidates on the need to study the mark allocations more closely in order to maximise the returns for their efforts. Once again, it is necessary to remind Centres that they should be encouraging candidates to provide formulae and workings when they are undertaking tasks that involve calculations. Failure to provide this evidence of how they intend to answer the tasks often leads to the candidates losing marks if their final answer is incorrect.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

Overall the responses to this task were rather disappointing with many vague or irrelevant answers being provided.

The answers to **part (a)** were often confused and candidates appeared not to understand the difference between a mark-up and a gross profit margin. Only a minority of candidates produced correct worked examples.

The answers provided to **part (b)** were very disappointing with many candidates confusing the financial director with a financial accountant. The role of the management accountant was often explained quite well.

The responses provided for **part (c)** were much better with most candidates able to identify possible advantages and disadvantages of a franchise agreement.

The answers to **part (d)** were generally good with the majority of the candidates able to explain the advantages and disadvantages of leasing.

The answers to **part (e)** were rather disappointing with many candidates unable to provide both an advantage and a disadvantage of sub-contracting.

Task 2

The answers provided to **part (a)** of this task were rather disappointing, with only a small minority of candidates scoring high marks. Most candidates could explain what working capital is, but few were able to explain why it is important to monitor working capital.

The answers to **part (b)** were rather disappointing. Most candidates were aware of how to draw up a cash budget but only a minority of candidates were able to provide a completely accurate cash budget using the information from the case study.

Task 3

The answers provided to **part (a)** were generally good with relevant explanations of the consequences.

The answers to **part (b)(i)** were good with most candidates able to identify four relevant sources of capital.

The answers to **part (b)(ii)** were rather patchy with vague explanations of the advantages of using the chosen sources of capital.

The answers provided for **part (c)** were disappointing with many candidates simply repeating answers from **part (b)(ii)** rather than providing a reasoned justification for their chosen source of funds.

Task 4

Overall the answers to this task were disappointing. Only a minority of candidates were able to provide a complete explanation of the balance sheet equation, with many candidates confusing the equation with a trial balance or a balance sheet. The answers provided for **part (b)** were rather better but it is disappointing to see that many candidates cannot produce a correct format for the balance sheet and as a consequence they did not receive the full award of marks that are allowed for the format. Centres are urged to address this problem as a matter of urgency.

Task 5

Overall the answers to this task were good and it is evident that this is a topic where candidates have been prepared well. The answers to **parts (a), (b) and (c)** were often completely accurate and many candidates scored full marks. The answers to **part (d)** were disappointing with many candidates unsure of how to assess the benefits to the firm of the alternative capital purchase.

BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL

Paper 8928/5164

Marketing

General comments

It is very pleasing to report that some Centres achieved good marks for this paper this session. Good candidates know the syllabus well, and are able to identify the relevant concepts required by each task. They also apply these concepts to the material in the case study.

There were some areas that candidates still, perhaps under the pressure of the examination situation, do not always read/analyse the requirements of the task sufficiently. Teachers/tutors can help candidates develop this skill by discussing past paper tasks during teaching sessions. The specifics of each task for this paper are detailed in the section that follows.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

- (a) The first part of this task looked for candidates to explain relationship marketing. Generally, candidates were able to do so for the five marks that were available. A variety of definitions were accepted by Examiners and all centred on retaining customers' loyalty through quality service and meeting their needs.
- (b) The second part of this task was also generally done well by many candidates. Many were able to identify the fact that cost savings could be made as less marketing activity is needed, and also the fact that loyal customers are less likely to move to competitors. However, fewer candidates mentioned that valuable word of mouth communication can be gained from loyal customers. Even fewer used the information in the case study which identified the fact that existing customers were from a segment able to pay premium prices and so profits would fall if relationship marketing was not practised.

Task 2

This task explored the role of marketing research.

- (a) This part of the task was generally done well. Five marks were available for simply listing the stages of the marketing research process. Some candidates wasted time explaining each of these stages. Teachers should remind candidates to read tasks carefully and ensure that they understand the requirements before answering.
- (b) There were three sources of secondary data required by this part of the task. Candidates who linked appropriate sources to the information in the case study and expanded by justifying the way in which the data would be used gained high marks.

Task 3

This task explored research methods as well as segmentation in general. Unfortunately many candidates were not able to explain the difference between focus groups and questionnaires and so missed the opportunity for marks in the first part of the task. Most candidates were able to define segmentation and many candidates were able to recommend an appropriate segment for the company in the case study to target.

Task 4

This task was set to assess the marketing planning process. Those who attempted this question generally did well.

- (a) The marks for this part of the task were linked specifically to the case study. Most candidates were able to identify two of the three economic factors in the case study and so gained high marks.
- (b) This part of the task was broken down into four parts, each examining one aspect of marketing planning. The section on SWOT analysis was generally done well, as was the section on objectives. Some candidates were able to give a good and relevant example of a SMART objective. The other parts of this task were also generally well done, with good candidates identifying that the marketing mix consisted of product, price promotion and place and was a series of linked marketing activities to achieve objectives.

Good candidates identified that control mechanisms could be quantitative or qualitative, and gave relevant examples.

Task 5

This final task assesses the candidates' understanding of the competence relating to the importance and impact of each element of the marketing mix. On this occasion, the task linked to the case study, and asked for both a relevant promotional mix as well as appropriate ways in which the product might be adapted as a result of the research findings.

- (a) This part of the task allocated 3 marks to each of the 5 elements of the promotional mix. Although many candidates could describe these generically it was rarer to see a mix that was related to the specifics of the case study and the task.
- (b) This part of the task was not done well. Many candidates wrote about the 'price' element of the mix rather than 'product'. Those candidates that did well were able to identify that perhaps lower quality products could be used in the fitting out of the buildings, or that a lower level of customer service might be acceptable.

BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL

Paper 8928/5165

Human Resource Management

General comments

The quality of responses to the tasks on this paper continues to improve. Candidates now understand what is required and seem better suited to the standards at this level.

There is still a tendency for candidates not to use the case study material, and at times they fail to provide a technical answer, preferring to respond in a way that would be expected from someone who has not followed the syllabus. Candidates must realise that the case study provides a framework for the answers and in many cases actually provides the answers.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

This task highlighted the problems that candidates have separating selection from recruitment. Whilst in reality it is one continuous process it is important to recognise which parts are labelled recruitment and which parts are selection.

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to list four elements of the selection process.
- (b) There were a significant number of candidates who answered this task by explaining why workers are dismissed or resign. Very few candidates actually linked the contract to dismissal or resignation. Many detailed accounts of the processes and the problems were also evident.
- (c) Too many candidates explained the recruitment and selection process or were unable to separate the two parts. This is disappointing and shows that more work in this area is required.

Task 2

This task was generally well answered but part (c) produced some very weak answers. This clearly shows that the candidates' knowledge of the labour market and its influences is quite weak.

- (a) Too many candidates ignored the case study and simply listed generic features of a labour market and not the ones faced by OPCC.
- (b) This produced full answers but the majority of candidates ignored the legal aspect of these laws. Too many candidates explained what these laws are rather than why they are important to OPCC.
- (c) The candidates' answers to this part of the task were very disappointing especially when significant parts of the answer were contained in the case study text. It seems that candidates were unable to take the information given and apply it to answer the task. Application is an important skill that separates the pass grade candidates from the distinction candidates and should be encouraged.

Task 3

There still appears to be a problem for most candidates when distinguishing between the meaning and purpose of HRM. This section of the syllabus is as important as the rest but consistently seems to be neglected.

- (a) This part of the task was poorly answered with too many candidates quoting the purposes of HRM.
- (b) Candidates answered this task well. There were many full mark answers.
- (c) The better candidates produced excellent answers to this task but the majority ignored the task and described centralised and decentralised HRM. It is important that candidates answer the task set, which in this case was to explain the differences.

Task 4

This section of the syllabus although well taught creates the same problem as selection and recruitment. Candidates cannot differentiate between communication and conflict resolution.

- (a) All candidates were able to list at least two systems. However, the task required the systems used by OPCC to be listed; many candidates did not quote from the case study.
- (b) Many candidates produced highly technical accounts of the two procedures showing a very detailed knowledge of both grievance and discipline. In some cases the amount of detail was far in excess of what was required.
- (c) There appears to be a genuine failure of the candidates to understand how to apply their knowledge to answer a task that requires more depth. Too many candidates explained what standards and targets are, although many found it difficult to explain the difference. Very few candidates could use their knowledge of standards and targets to explain how OPCC could measure and monitor workers' performance. Too many candidates discussed the use of piece rate and bonuses as a way of measuring a worker's output.

Task 5

This task as a whole was well answered but there remain some areas of concern that need to be addressed. This assessment objective appears to be well taught and understood by almost all of the candidates. Very few candidates failed to answer this task due to time constraints

- (a) This part of the task was extremely well answered.
- (b) This was generally well answered but the majority find it very difficult to explain the difference between payment by results and a bonus payment. Many produced identical explanations.
- (c) This task was intended to test the candidates on motivational factors other than money. The best candidates produced some excellent answers using the materials in the case study but too many simply explained the concept of fringe benefits or repeated the use of bonus payments. This area of the syllabus has been tested before and candidates still do not seem to understand this concept as well as they should. This is an area for development.

BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STANDARD LEVEL

Paper 8928/5166
Interpersonal Business Skills

General comments

Most assignments were properly laid out and well presented for marking. Those candidates obtaining a 'pass' or higher grade had made the effort to meet all the criteria as listed in the module booklet; those obtaining a higher grade had extended and developed their comments in the text of the assignments. Those candidates who had used the Assignment Cover Sheets were able to check that their work was complete and that all the objectives had been covered.

Some candidates were not successful and a number of weaknesses, as shown below, contributed to these assignments.

- A failure to include a teacher observation statement where the candidate had made a presentation or led a discussion.
- The bibliography was weak and/or not cross-referenced to the text of the assignment.
- The candidate did not evidence the topic 'assertiveness', and where this was not appropriate, a comment indicating an understanding had not been made in the text.
- Copies of PowerPoint slides were included in the appendices section but no captions or notes about their use had been included.
- Some candidates failed to include a report of the Reference Group activity.
- Although most candidates presented their work with a good business-like layout others were confused about what should be included in the appendices section. Advice should be sought from teachers in these circumstances.

BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL

Paper 8928/5169

Business Organisation and Environment

General comments

The examination raised a number of issues:

- (i) Invigilators are advised to read the information on the front page out aloud to candidates so there is no question of misunderstanding how they should proceed.
- (ii) Candidates must read both the case study and the accompanying tasks carefully. They must ensure that they understand precisely what the Examiner wants them to do. Candidates often fail to do themselves justice simply because they either misread or fail to comprehend a task. The invigilator must emphasise that 15 minutes' reading time is provided in order to help candidates become acquainted with the contents of the examination paper.
- (iii) An expectation of the case study is that candidates will respond in *the* appropriate context. This means that, unless the task calls for general business knowledge, answers should be clearly related to the case study. Marks are often lost because the context is disregarded. It is not enough to display knowledge and teachers should ensure that their candidates understand the importance of context. To reinforce this point, some candidates gave excellent answers to the 4 mark tasks in this examination paper but could earn no more than 3 marks owing to the lack of context. The loss of even a few marks in this way could prohibit a candidate from getting a better grade.
- (iv) Candidates must appreciate that a short and focused answer is preferable to one that is lengthy and offers little substance. They need to differentiate between the demands of different value tasks. There is little to be gained from writing a detailed answer to a 2 mark task and then giving very little attention to one offering 4 marks. At no point in the examination paper are candidates required to submit detailed essay-type answers but they must write sufficient detail to demonstrate to the Examiner that they understand the tasks.
- (v) Candidates are mostly asked to *describe* or *explain*, and a typical failing is an insufficiency of description or explanation. The majority of candidates sit the examination in a second language and incorrect spelling and grammatical errors are not taken into consideration. The demonstration of business knowledge and, where required, the evidence of reasoning, is much more important than the quality of written language. However, it must be emphasised that very poorly expressed answers, especially those which expect the Examiner to guess a candidate's meaning and intention, may not be marked very favourably.
- (vi) Candidates must not underestimate the importance of time management. The evidence indicates that all the tasks are completed within the allotted time. It is appreciated that an examination will put candidates under pressure but teachers need to instruct them on how to pace themselves and not panic because of the time constraint.
- (vii) Layout of responses still needs attention but mostly scripts seem to be better presented. Unclear or untidy scripts can present Examiners with unnecessary difficulties. No marks are deducted from scripts where candidates ignored advice about, for example, leaving margins clear, or starting each task on a separate sheet of paper, but teachers and candidates must acknowledge that these instructions have a purpose.

- (viii) Unfortunately poor examination technique remains an issue and still hinders the achievement of higher marks for many candidates. Teachers are strongly advised to address the subject when preparing their candidates for the examinations. Previous examination papers and the Principal Examiner reports are readily available and it is recommended that they are used during the revision period.
- (ix) There are still candidates who insist on copying out the tasks and wasting their valuable examination time. Weaker candidates often answer tasks by copying out segments of the case study in which case they fail to earn marks.

Comments on specific tasks

The focus of the case study was Lucky Charm Gifts Ltd. Over 20 years the company had grown from a sole trader business operating a rented kiosk in a market to a limited company owning several shops and kiosks, a warehouse and a workshop. The chosen market was the souvenir business in which the owner and main shareholder, Ayesha, had been very successful. The responses to the tasks needed to take into account the nature, objectives, and features of the business.

Task 1

- (a) Ayesha said that turning Lucky Charm Gifts into a private company had given her some advantages over being a sole trader. Candidates were asked to suggest two features of a private company which gave her those advantages. Candidates were expected to identify those features which were specifically in the context of both case study and task and not to give features of a limited company. This meant that references to, for example, the transferability of shares and the lack of compulsion to publish accounts were considered irrelevant and not awarded marks. The main points to discuss were that the limited company:

- had limited liability
- could continue in perpetuity
- enjoyed the status of an artificial legal person
- could still be controlled by Ayesha as its sole director

Mostly the features identified were limited liability and perpetuity although it was also suggested that capital was easily raised and the responsibility for running the business was shared. Neither of these latter points was considered particularly strong nor applicable.

- (b) This task called upon candidates to explain three of Ayesha's business objectives.
- (i) The first objective was to provide employment. The text said that the business operated in areas of high unemployment and clearly it provided a lifeline to some people. Many candidates suggested that Ayesha acted altruistically in wanting to give jobs to the unemployed. However, the objective was much simpler than that because Ayesha recognised that no business could survive without employees and their specialisms or skills. Few candidates were able to make that point. A significant number earned marks for suggesting that she might have received government grants for locating in deprived areas. Some responses strayed into the following task and spoke of the local standard of living.
- (ii) The second objective was to raise the local standard of living. Overall this task was quite well done as it recognised that even a few new employment opportunities would enable some families to enjoy a better life. Their increased expenditure would also help to employ others. Their better earnings meant the ability to pay taxes which in turn could bring benefits to their community. The connection with the foregoing task was well made.
- (iii) The third objective was to enlarge Ayesha's share of the market. Mostly candidates understood the objective, rightly pointing out that a larger share would mean higher turnover and possibly better profits too. Improved business might also mean more employment opportunities. Some responses were historical in the sense that the previous development of the company was discussed and, by implication, this objective had been achieved. The case study did not mention that Ayesha was satisfied with the size of her market share but it could have been assumed that further growth was possible.

- (c) This task asked for explanations of two financial terms.
- (i) The first was double-entry bookkeeping. The majority of candidates understood that every item of income or expenditure had to be recorded twice, once as a debit and once as a credit. Better answers said that the system ensured that assets equalled liabilities which ensured that the balance sheet always balanced.
 - (ii) The second was *bank reconciliation* and this term did not appear to be well understood. Many answers dealt with loans and borrowings from the bank instead of pointing out that when Lucky Charm Gifts received a bank statement it was checked against the firm's receipts and payments. The bank reconciliation helped to ensure that both the bank and business records were correct.

Task 2

- (a) Candidates were asked to explain three purposes of an organisation chart.
- (i) The first purpose was that it identified the channel of communication and the weaker responses confused this task with item (iii) below. The essential point here was that the chart indicated the route through which staff and managers communicated. It was organised on a top-down basis to allow Ayesha to issue orders but also bottom-up to permit feedback from employees.
 - (ii) The second purpose was that it indicated the span of control. Again there was some reference to (iii) below but mostly candidates understood that the span of control referred to the number of staff answerable to any one manager. Some explained the difference between wide and narrow spans. Ayesha had a wide span of control because she directed all the managers and outlets.
 - (iii) The third purpose was that it showed the levels of authority. Candidates were comfortable with this task and explanations clearly stated that the chart indicated to whom employees were responsible, who had authority and their positions, and the posts held by the employees.
- (b) Lucky Charm Gifts was a centralised business. Candidates were asked to identify one advantage and one disadvantage of centralisation to Lucky Charm Gifts Ltd. Explanations were fairly predictable and dull but at least the candidates understood the basic issues. The main advantage identified was that Ayesha was able to maintain strict control over the business but the explanation needed to be refined to include the promotion of the company's image, reputation and policy. The main disadvantage of centralisation was readily recognised as being likely to reduce initiative within the business along with the risk that managers could become demoralised.
- (c) The case study explained that Ayesha has agreed to appoint a non-executive director. Candidates had two tasks to complete in this regard.
- (i) Candidates were asked to explain a non-executive director. There were a few candidates who knew the answer but generally the responses were either incomplete or wrong. It has been noted before that tasks relating to directors are invariably handled weakly. The point most understood was that a non-executive director would not be employed by Lucky Charm Gifts and as such had no day-to-day involvement. Most candidates thought that the director would be a shareholder, which was not unlikely, when the most probable explanation was that s/he would be invited to join the Board because of expertise or the representation of a stakeholder e.g. the bank.
 - (ii) The next task called for the suggestion of a benefit to Lucky Charm Gifts of appointing a non-executive director to the Board. Most responses were weak and tended to follow the case study's comment that the director would strengthen the Board. What was really required was an acknowledgement that not being directly involved in the business meant that the non-executive director was more likely to be independent and could offer unbiased advice – in other words, the director could bring an 'outside view' and different perspective to Board discussions.

Task 3

- (a) Candidates were asked to describe three expectations that the employees might reasonably have had of their employer.
- (i) The first of these expectations dealt with training. Overall candidates dealt well with this task but tended to concentrate on the benefit to the business i.e. training helped to make employees more productive and cost effective, and that some roles within Lucky Charm Gifts were specialist and staff needed training to fulfil them. However, there was the personal aspect to consider in that training would give employees job satisfaction and help them to achieve better earnings and possibly promotion. This latter point was the more important expectation.
 - (ii) The second expectation concerned financial and non-financial incentives. What was required here was some reason for incentives along with some appropriate examples. Mostly the candidates correctly identified incentives but added wages and salaries which, in the main, do not have any lasting effect as incentives. Many rightly saw incentives as rewards for good work and to encourage loyalty to the business.
 - (iii) The third expectation was fair treatment. There were three types of response here: the first referred to all staff being treated exactly the same with no favouritism; the second dwelt on matters of health and safety; and the third focused correctly on the absence of gender, age and racial discrimination. The main points to have developed were about negative discrimination and also that management should not display unreasonable behaviour towards the employees. An answer could have been refined with reference to the existence of a system to deal with internal disputes.
- (b) The case study explained that the company supported job-sharing. Candidates were asked to explain what job-sharing meant and to identify one benefit it gave the employees. Job-sharing should have been explained as one full-time job undertaken by two people who split the working week (or other suitable time period) between them (mostly on a 50:50 basis) with each employee being paid pro-rata. A common error was to confuse it with shift work and/or to suggest that the system meant a job was completed faster.

The benefit to be identified was to the employee not to the employer; some candidates overlooked that distinction. Generally, the candidates suggested the system best suited working mothers since they could work and still attend to domestic responsibilities. Essentially job-sharing enabled an employee to be economically active and contribute to Ayesha's company on a part-time basis while having time to pursue other interests, like studying, or meeting other responsibilities. Indeed, it also offered the chance to do another but different part-time job.

- (c) Like most companies these days, Lucky Charm Gifts Ltd made use of computer technology. Candidates were asked to suggest two ways in which Ayesha was likely to use computers in her business. This task could be applied to almost any business and general responses were acceptable. Candidates experienced no real difficulty in responding to this task. Uses could have been drawn from e.g. accounts, staffing or HRM records, payroll, production of souvenirs, stock control, ordering of supplies and email links between each branch. Each use just needed a sentence to explain how it could be applied.

Task 4

- (a) Every business is affected in some way by PEST or external factors and candidates were asked to explain how the Lucky Charm Gifts company might be influenced by three specific factors.
- (i) The first factor was taxation. Responses tended to treat tax and its affect on Ayesha negatively i.e. tax as a disincentive and how it reduced company profits. Certainly any increase in business taxes might have meant increasing prices or reducing pay rises. However, tax could have offered Ayesha an incentive regarding her enterprise e.g. tax holidays, allowances for investment, lower tax threshold.
 - (ii) The second factor was competition and this task was answered quite well as candidates clearly understood the term but even so a lot of good answers ignored the context. Candidates were entitled to assume that the souvenir market was active and competitive.

Many responses suggested competition was healthy as it kept companies alert and it would encourage Ayesha to offer new products or to revise her pricing structure. On the other hand, aggressive competition could result in lower turnover and profits, job losses, even the sale of outlets; and, at its worse, the closure of the business.

- (iii) The third factor was the law regarding the employment of staff. The essence of this task was that a change in the law might make employment of staff more expensive because of, for example, legislation limiting the working week or the payment of a national minimum wage. Mostly candidates focused on health and safety issues and working conditions and these points were not acceptable. The main weakness here was the lack of application to Lucky Charm Gifts.
- (b)
- (i) This task asked candidates to address the factors which decided the location of Lucky Charm Gifts shops. The first factor was Ayesha's access to the market. This task seemed to defeat most attempts despite the text stating that the shops were located in tourist areas. The clue was clear. Ayesha's outlets catered for the tourist trade so they needed to be positioned in those areas where tourist traffic was heavy. Ideally, those areas needed to be provided with appropriate attractions to bring in the tourists. Candidates could have assumed that Ayesha's outlets would have been part of the tourist trail.
 - (ii) The next factor was the supply of labour. The answers to this obvious task were mostly disappointing. Again the clue was given quite clearly in the text. Despite being located in tourist areas that did not mean that employment was high, quite the contrary as far as the case was concerned. Ayesha should have been able to draw upon a ready supply of suitable labour for her business i.e. there ought to have been several applicants for each job meaning that Ayesha was able to select appropriate personnel. In the main these points were missed by the candidates.

Task 5

- (a) Ayesha said that her company was trading in a 'chosen market' and candidates were asked to clarify what she meant by that. It was clear that few candidates understood the term. However, there were some firm responses pointing out that Ayesha had made a positive choice to enter the market of tourist related products. Generally there may have been some confusion with **Task 4(b)(i)** above as the term 'market' was erroneously interpreted as a specific place. The feature of a chosen market is that Ayesha was able to get to know customer requirements, develop product lines and build a reputation.
- (b) Ayesha claimed that her company had got the right balance in its marketing mix. This task called for an explanation of three elements of the marketing mix. Many candidates seemed to ignore the fact that they were not asked for a general explanation of the marketing mix and the main failure here was the lack of application to the case.
- (b)
- (i) The first component of the marketing mix was price. The point that Ayesha operated a dual pricing system occurred to some candidates i.e. that she was using discriminatory pricing when selling to both foreign tourists as well as locals. The price should also have reflected the nature of the product and its quality. A number of candidates chose to write about the different pricing systems available to a business without really focusing on the case.
 - (ii) The next one was product. Some responses did not even mention the product or product group i.e. souvenirs or mementos of the country and pieces of local artwork. Ayesha was selling proven popular lines and the success of her business indicated that she offered the right goods at the right price in the right place. Overall, this task was not well done.
 - (iii) The last component was promotion and generally the point candidates made was that Ayesha should choose the appropriate media to sell her souvenirs without actually identifying any one medium. Many picked up the point in the case study about her advertisements in tourist guides and brochures but significant promotional means like attractive shop layouts and in-store events were omitted.

- (c)** The final task asked for an explanation of what Ayesha meant when she talked of a good customer relations policy. There was a clear understanding that Ayesha wanted to satisfy her customers with good quality products but it wasn't acknowledged who the customers were. Candidates suggested that the purpose of the policy was to encourage repeat sales overlooking the fact that Ayesha sold to tourists who were unlikely to return to the area. Ideally the policy should have contained e.g. how staff should treat customers, how any complaints and problems were dealt with, selling in more than one currency, sending purchases overseas, and acceptance of credit cards. Rather than identifying this essential issue, most candidates talked around the subject.

BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL

Paper 8928/5167
Business Start-up

General comments

In general, assignments submitted under this module were of good quality and demonstrated the commitment of teachers and candidates alike. There was a keenness to use business-like conventions and this contributed to the excellent presentation of assignments.

Most of the assignments were well researched and composed; the candidates setting out convincing business plans within the guidelines of 1400 – 1800 words.

A 'conclusion' to the submitted work may not be appropriate for this module but a self-evaluation written by the candidate is expected; guidelines for the content of this section can be found in the Assignment Cover Sheet.

Some candidates were not successful and a number of weaknesses, as shown below, contributed to these assignments.

- It would have been helpful if headings taken from the Assignment Cover Sheet were used in the construction of the submitted work.
- Some candidates failed to give clear evidence of the objectives in the text of their assignments.
- Sometimes reference sources were weak and cross-referencing within the text had not been carried out.
- A number of candidates confused 'conclusion' with 'self-evaluation' and the advice of teachers should be sought to clarify the two.
- Although, generally speaking, candidates submitted assignments that had a good lay-out, some had used too many bullet points throughout rather than discuss or comment on elements of research and understanding.
- Some candidates failed to fully describe how they would use their personal skills in the business proposition; this is an important issue because the candidate is more than likely to be the head of the proposed organisation.

BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STANDARD LEVEL

Paper 8928/5168
Customer Care

General comments

Some excellent assignments were submitted for this module. Those candidates who had made the effort to extend their assignment content often gained a high grade.

A general weakness with all submissions was the apparent lack of understanding of how customer care operated in other organisations; a comment on the wider aspects would have been appropriate.

A number of weaknesses were shown in the weaker assignments. These and other comments are listed below.

- The assignment text contained many errors that should have been corrected before being submitted for marking.
- Too many bullet points were used in the assignment; it would have been appropriate for the candidate to add more discussion in the text.
- There was some confusion as to what should be included in the appendices section. Guidance on this should be sought from the course tutor.
- The candidate failed to see his work in the broader context of how it related to other organisations.
- Self-evaluation was often confused with the report conclusion. Guidelines for self-evaluation can be found in the Assignment Cover Sheet.
- The majority of assignments were well presented and had an acceptable layout but on occasions it was found that the 'contents page' did not match the actual pages or it was incomplete.
- The assignment was too simplistic and some concepts could have been extended.
- A very dark watermark had been added to the pages of the assignment making it difficult to read; this was unnecessary.

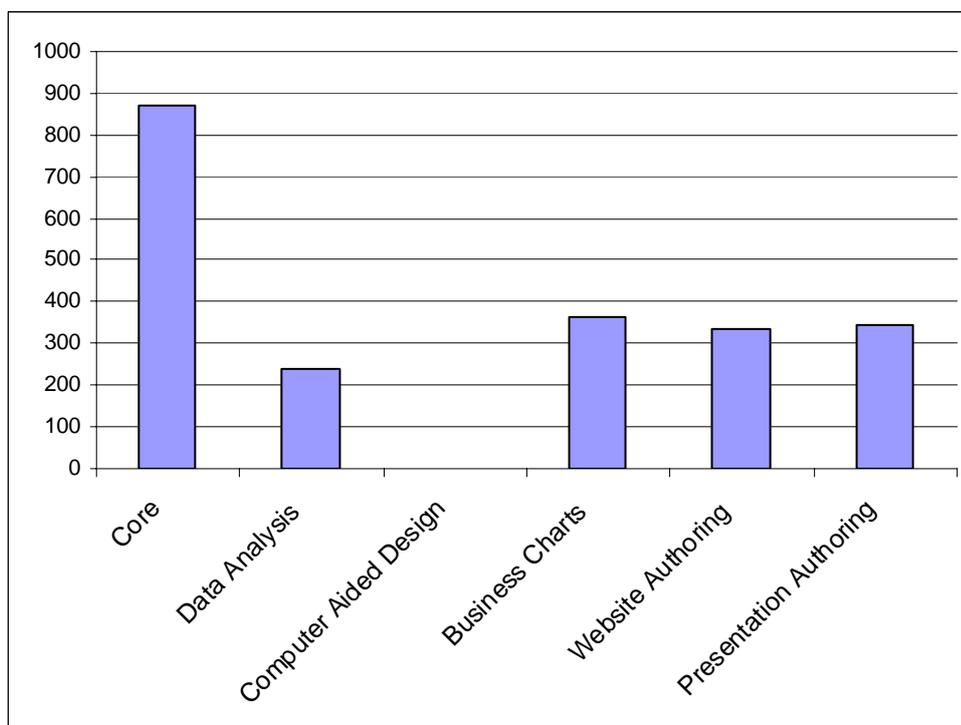
BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL, ICT STANDARD LEVEL AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STANDARD LEVEL

Paper 8928/5191

Information and Communications Technology and Core

Standard Level

This level comprised a Core module and five enhancement modules.



The overall pass rate for these modules was in line with last year with candidates showing a good understanding of the subject knowledge and practical skills.

5191 Standard Core

The general standard of entries for this module was high, although there were a number of errors which included:

- Errors in searching, either by trying to search using the results of a previous search rather than all the data, through errors in the search criteria, or in the selection of the data for the database extract.
- Some candidates could not correctly align text, especially when asked to fully justify the body text of a document.
- Errors in sorting the data as specified in the question paper, particularly by sorting only the specified field and therefore failing to maintain the integrity of the data. Candidates who made this error were usually using a spreadsheet package rather than a database. Some candidates confused ascending and descending sorts.

- The failure to understand the generic terms serif, and sans-serif. Many candidates tried to locate these as font styles rather than understanding that fonts such as Times New Roman contain short strokes or serifs on each letter, and that sans-serif fonts are without these.
- When the page break has been removed in the second version of the document the line spacing was not maintained.
- Errors in page layout with the failure to set margins or column widths as specified.

BUSINESS STANDARD LEVEL AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STANDARD LEVEL

**Paper 8928/5237
Organising Meetings and Events**

The overall performance of the candidates was very good; candidates were well prepared and correctly organised a meeting, as required. They produced reports detailing how they had organised their meetings and the documentation and methods of communication they had produced and used.

COMMENTS ON THE WORK OF CANDIDATES

The reports produced were legible and detailed. Copies of letters, emails, agenda, notice of meeting, minutes, chairperson's agenda and transcripts of telephone conversations were submitted.

Candidates assessed the planning, organising and monitoring methods they used. They then described whether or not these methods were successful and what they would do differently when they organise their next meeting.