

**CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL**

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE  
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION  
JANUARY 2007**

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION**

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**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION**  
**GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**  
**JANUARY 2007**

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

Candidates' performance in the January 2007 sitting was encouraging. There was an improvement in performance over that of previous years. More specific comments will be addressed separately under each paper. Three papers were offered at the General Proficiency level:

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Paper 02 – Short answer

Paper 3/2 – Alternative to the SBA

The examination was designed to ensure broad coverage of the syllabus, and the objectives tested were chosen from all the units.

**Paper 01 – Multiple Choice**

Candidates' performance in this paper declined slightly over the performance in previous January sittings. The overall mean of the paper in the 2007 examination was 36.46, compared with 38.43 and 39.42 for January 2006 and 2005 respectively. Marks ranged from 0 to 54 out of a maximum of 60.

**Paper 02 – Short Answer**

This paper consisted of two sections. Section I comprised four compulsory questions based on Modules I, II, III, IV, V, VI and XII, and Section II which consisted of four optional questions based on Modules VII, VIII, IX, XI. Candidates were required to answer two questions from Section II. Knowledge and the application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and office routines were tested. Candidates performance on this paper improved slightly compared with that of January 2006. The overall mean for this Paper was 42.08 compared with 38.49 in 2006. Marks ranged from 2 to 80 out of a maximum of 90.

A general observation on candidates' performance determined that new aspects of the syllabus that were tested, challenged candidates and affected their overall performance. Some instances were the term 'ergonomic considerations' in Question 1, a comparative graph in question 2, 'copyrighted material' in question 3 and terminology used in meetings in question 4. In Section II, the terms 'job description and job specification' in Question 5, and the notice of tender in question 7 were not favourably addressed.

### **Paper 03/2 – Alternative to the School-Based Assessment (SBA)**

This paper took the form of a written examination that targeted private candidates who would not have had the opportunity to complete SBA projects as school candidates. The paper was designed to test the candidates' ability to use their personal experiences on routine office activities acquired through observation or from doing the actual office tasks as a real employee. The paper consisted of ten structured questions based on an office case. For this examination the case focused on Modules I, II, and XII of the syllabus.

Candidates' performance in this paper continued to improve in some areas over that of previous examinations. It is noted, however, that some areas continue to challenge candidates and affect their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 26.04 out of a maximum of 50. When this is compared with the 2006 paper which had a mean of 28.50 a slight decline is evident. Marks ranged from 3 to 47 out of a maximum of 50.

#### **DETAILED COMMENTS**

##### **Paper 02 – Short Answer**

Section I was compulsory and each question was worth 15 marks.

##### Question 1

This question tested Module I (Objectives 3 and 5) and Module IV (Objective 1).

For Part (a), candidates were required to list three basic skills that are required for entry-level positions in the current job market. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were required to state four ways in which a receptionist can contribute to the goodwill of an organisation. This was worth 4 marks. The majority of candidates were able to provide correct responses for Parts (a) and (b).

In Part (c), candidates were to provide four ergonomic considerations and briefly explain how each contributes to the employees' satisfactory working environment. This was worth 8 marks. The majority of candidates were challenged by the term 'ergonomics'. In many instances references were made to 'staff welfare'. Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 5.20.

##### Question 2

This question tested Module II (Objectives 2 and 3).

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to list four factors that would determine the medium used to communicate with business associates. This was worth 4 marks.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were asked to identify three of the most economical means of communicating with the branches of the company. This was worth 3 marks.

These two parts of this question were well done.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were provided with a set of comparative statistics. They were required to draw a comparative graph to represent the statistical data provided. This was worth 6 marks. Most candidates were unable to correctly represent data on the graph.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were to indicate the grade that reflects the most similar performance for the two years. This was worth 2 marks. The majority of candidates responded satisfactorily on this part of the question. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 5.86.

### Question 3

This question tested Module XII (Objective 2) and Module III (Objectives 2 and 4).

For Part (a), candidates were to list three factors which a person should consider when seeking employment. This was worth 3 marks. The majority of candidates provided correct responses.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were to state two advantages of numerical filing systems. This was worth 2 marks. The majority of candidates earned full marks.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were to state two advantages of electronic filing systems. This was worth 2 marks. This part of the questions challenged many students.

For Part (c), candidates were required to draft a memorandum from the Human Resource Manager, informing all staff that management has agreed to enforce copyright legal stipulations throughout the organization. In Part (i) of the question, candidates were to refer to how the policy will affect the writer of the copyrighted material; and in Part (ii) they were to indicate the impact on the photocopying and general costs of the organization. This was worth 8 marks.

The performance on this part of the question was unsatisfactory as the majority of candidates neglected to provide an appropriate memorandum format, and to indicate the information as guided in the question. It is apparent that the majority of candidates were unfamiliar with the requirements of the Copyright Act in their respective territories. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 7.31.

### Question 4

This question tested Module IV (Objectives 1 and 3) and Module V (Objectives 1 and 3).

For Part (a), candidates were to list three pieces of equipment that may be required by a presenter at a meeting. This was worth 3 marks. Many candidates were unable to differentiate between 'supplies' and 'equipment'.

For Part (b), candidates were asked to define four terms as they are used in meetings. This was worth 4 marks. Many candidates were unable to provide correct definitions for meeting terminology.

In Part (c), candidates were required to make diary entries for a manager. Many responses did not indicate correct timing for post-lunch activities. This was worth 5 marks.

Part (d) of this question asked candidates to prepare an e-mail to make a hotel reservation for single occupancy. While many candidates were able to word the e-mail message, they showed weaknesses in its layout and the relevant information. This was worth 3 marks.

The overall performance in this question was satisfactory. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 3.06.

## **Section II – Optional Questions**

### Question 5

This question tested Module VII (Objective 4) and Module VIII (Objective 5).

For Part (a), candidates were to assume the position of a human resource clerk who discovers that an employee's record shows that he is HIV-positive. Candidates were to state in Part (a) (i), the HR clerk's obligation to the organisation, and in Part (ii), obligation to the employee. This was worth 4 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were to define the terms 'job description' and 'job specification'. The majority of candidates earned full marks, while others were unable to differentiate between the two terms. This was worth 2 marks.

In Part (c) (i), candidates were required to use an electronic transfer form to make a payment. This was worth 7 marks. The majority of candidates were able to secure close to maximum marks.

In Part (ii), candidates were to list two advantages of using the electronic transfer form to make a payment. This was worth 2 marks. This part of the question was answered well. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 9.64.

### Question 6

This question tested Module VIII (Objectives 3 and 4) and Module IX (Objective 2).

For Part (a) candidates were to identify one situation in which 'credit note', 'debit note' and 'statement of account' will be issued by a wholesale company. This was worth 3 marks. Some candidates were unsure of the differences between the credit and debit notes. In addition, the statement of account was defined as the bank statement.

For Part (b) candidates were to list three ways in which the facsimile machine contributed to efficiency in business. This segment of the question presented little difficulty to most candidates. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c), candidates were provided with a list of companies, their addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. Candidates were to use the listing to develop a database of suppliers. This was worth 9 marks. Marks to Question 6 ranged from 0 – 14 and the mean was 7.69.

### Question 7

This question tested Module IX (Objectives 3, 5 and 6).

For Part (a), candidates were to identify three reasons why it is important for a company to maintain control of its inventory. This was worth 3 marks. Candidates responded to this part of the question satisfactorily.

For Part (b), candidates were to list ways in which the Optical Character Reader facilitates inventory control. This was worth 3 marks. This was not well done by candidates.

For Part (c), candidates were required to draft a Notice of Tender to obtain a suitable restaurant operator. This was worth 9 marks. Many candidates treated the tender as a memorandum or a report. Some did not utilise the information that was provided in the question.

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 6.46.

### Question 8

This question tested Module XI (Objectives 2 and 3).

For Part (a), candidates were to list three duties performed by a clerk in the factory office. The majority of candidates scored full marks for this part of the question. It was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were to give three benefits of an interaction between the Dispatch and Transport Office and the Sales Department. This was worth 3 marks. This segment was completed with satisfaction.

For Part (c), candidates were to utilise information on an order form to complete a Bill of Lading form that was provided.

Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 8.99.

## **Paper 03/2 General Proficiency**

### **The Alternative to the School-Based Assessment**

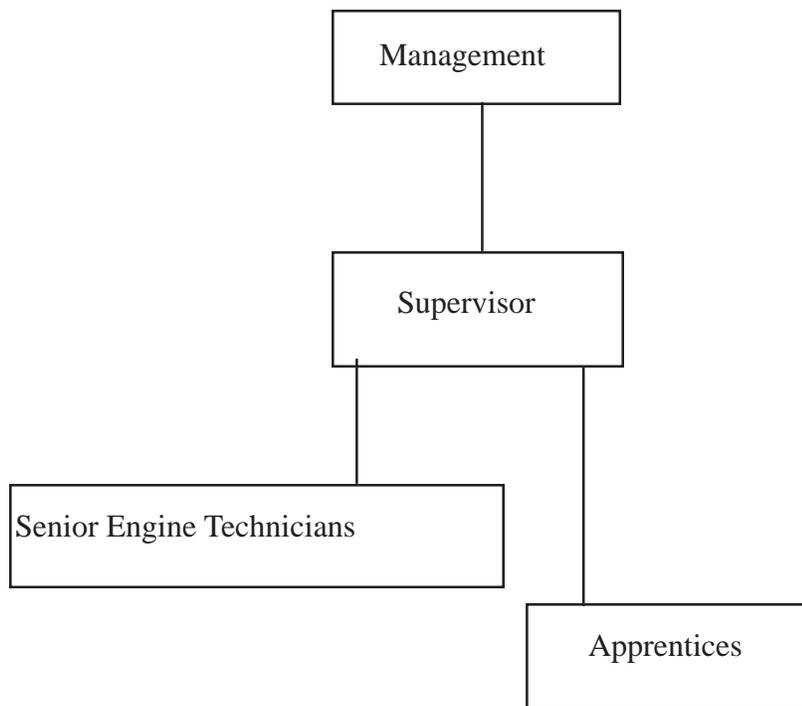
In order to answer the ten compulsory, structured questions, candidates were required to read the stimulus material provided in the form of a case. The entire paper was worth 50 marks.

## The Case

The case discussed the organisational structure of Total Auto Service where Florent Desir worked as a Supervisor. As part of her duties she interfaced with employees at all levels. The organisation was well structured and operated efficiently. Its organisational objectives focused on the structuring of activities, concentration of authority and control of work flow. Holders of positions were empowered as they strove to optimise on their levels of performance.

The overall performance on this paper was less than satisfactory. Some questions were challenging to candidates.

In Question 1, candidates were required to draw an organisational chart to show the relationship among positions identified in the case. This was worth 5 marks. Many candidates did not label the chart. Additionally, they were required to place 'management' at the highest level with the 'Supervisor' position reporting directly to them. The 'Senior Engine Technicians' and 'Apprentices' are two separate groups that report to the Supervisor. However, the 'Apprentices' are placed at a slightly lower level. An example of what was required is provided below.



Organisational Chart of Total Auto Services

In Question 5 candidates were asked to identify two possible benefits to Total Auto Services of 'concentration of authority'. Possible responses could have been:

- Reducing demands on supervisors' time;
- Enhancing line and staff and how they feel about each other;
- Making employees more responsible;
- Enabling management to focus on issues;
- Provide more training to employees.

This question was worth 2 marks.

Questions 7 and 8 tested the memorandum and letter of application respectively. In spite of the fact that these topics have been appearing on past examination papers, candidates continue to perform poorly. On the memorandum they did not indicate the words 'Memorandum' as a heading, while in other instances, they neglected to provide pertinent information on the position of Apprentice Engine Technician, that interested persons should convey their interest to their supervisors in writing by the deadline date of January 20, 2007.

In Question 8, the letter format required the following: a return address, date, inside address to the Human Resource Manager, relevant salutation and complimentary close as essential requirements to earn candidates marks. The body of the letter should have included an identification of the position applied for, interest in the position, levels of competence and qualifications. Information on references and willingness to attend an interview were regarded as asset points for the letter. Both questions were worth 6 marks each.

Question 9 asked candidates to draw a pie chart to represent data that was provided. Candidates were also reminded to use appropriate labeling. In many instances they failed to label the chart and the individual sectors of the chart. Some candidates drew bar and cylinder charts instead of the pie chart.

Question 10 asked for five recommendations to junior staff to ensure they maintain high quality in their job performance. While recommendations were provided, some candidates did not ensure that they were relevant to the question and the content of the case.

The overall mean on this paper was 25.18. Scores ranged from 3 to 47.

Candidates who are preparing for examinations are asked to be aware of the new areas to be tested in this syllabus. They need also to devote some attention to the areas which are continually tested but in which candidates performance is indicated as being poor.