

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS**

MAY/JUNE 2008

SOCIAL STUDIES

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GENERAL AND BASIC PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Questions on the core of the syllabus, Section A and Section B, Individual Interaction and the Development and use of Resources, continue to be popular while questions on Government and CARICOM remain unattractive for many candidates. None of the questions in section C, the Options, was especially popular in 2008. The overall performance of candidates in the General Proficiency examinations this year was moderate only.

The responses of the candidates who sat the General Proficiency level continue to be lengthy and varied. Some of these responses were well expressed and reflected the candidates' knowledge, understanding, exposure and experiences, in relation to social issues and concerns. Some candidates' responses clearly demonstrated their ability to express themselves clearly and in well constructed sentences and paragraphs. Candidates who did not prepare themselves for this examination offered unsatisfactory responses and demonstrated a lack of knowledge and understanding of the major terms and concepts outlined in the syllabus.

Many candidates did not respond adequately to the profile components of the questions. The part of the questions that tested the Interpretation profile presented challenges to many candidates. There was a tendency to offer explanations and to provide reasons that lacked development and clarity, despite the advice provided by the rubric to do so in every section of the paper. Several candidates used a 'common sense' approach and lacked depth and quality in their responses to the most questions. This approach is not a substitute for a careful study of the textual materials available to guide candidates in Social Studies.

There has been a steady decline in candidate entry and in the quality of candidates' responses in the Basic Proficiency Examinations. This proficiency level in Social Studies will not be offered after 2008.

Some candidates who attempted the Basic Proficiency Paper 02 wrote responses that contained single words, phrases and poorly constructed sentences. On the other hand, candidates who were prepared for this paper wrote responses that showed a good understanding of major terms and concepts. The overall performance in this paper was unsatisfactory.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Basic and General Proficiencies

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

This paper was common to both Basic and General Proficiencies. It examined the core of the syllabus in the Knowledge and Interpretation profiles. The paper consisted of 60 items distributed as follows: 24 on Individual Interaction and 36 on the Development and Use of Resources. The items on this paper tested various levels of difficulty and provided wide syllabus coverage. Performance on this paper was fair.

General Proficiency

Paper 02 – Structured Questions and Essays

Section A: Individual Interaction

In this section candidates were required to respond to two out of the three questions set. The quality of the responses offered by the candidates ranged from weak to outstanding. Questions 1 and 2 were quite popular.

Question 1

This was a popular question. It tested the candidates' knowledge and understanding of the terms, 'bigamy' and 'marriage'; the reasons for the changing traditional roles of men, and ways to deepen relationships among spouses. Some candidates were able to define the terms correctly and accurately. Bigamy was defined as "the marrying of two spouses at the same time", and a man "having several wives". Marriage was generally regarded as a legal union between two persons. Generally these terms were not clearly defined by many candidates. Factors such as trust, honesty, marital support, love and affection were correctly offered as ingredients for a successful marriage.

The Interpretation part asked candidates to offer reasons why the traditional roles of men in the Caribbean are changing. Most candidates offered reasons related to 'independence of women', 'employment and educational opportunities for women', the alteration of traditional beliefs about the role of women, and the work of women's groups and movements. However, in many instances these responses were not fully developed.

The Application part of the question asked to suggest to social workers a way to help young married couples resolve a named marital problem and to state why the ways should be acceptable. Some candidates did not name a marital problem such as breakdown in communication, infidelity or abuse, but suggested a way to resolve a marital problem.

The common responses offered as resolutions to marital problems were counselling of the marriage partners by qualified persons and the establishment of centres for conflict management. However, in some instances these suggestions were not adequately justified by the candidates. Generally the candidates' performance in this question was below expectations.

Question 2

This question focused on the family, and parenting practices and was quite popular. For the Knowledge part candidates were required to define the term 'family' and to state the effects of good parenting practices on children. Most of the acceptable definitions provided by the candidates mentioned a family as "a group of people living together and related by blood". The effects of good parenting practices were also well known by many candidates. Some examples of correct responses included "children would grow up with love and affection and develop good habits and relationships". Other correct responses related to discipline and respect for authority. Many candidates did this part of the question quite well.

The Interpretation part required candidates to explain ways poor parenting practices affect the behaviour of adolescents. Many candidates mentioned "rebellious behaviour, wrong doing, disrespect for authority and following the behaviour of their parents" in their responses. However these responses for the most part were not fully explained nor developed.

The Application part asked candidates to suggest a way youth leaders may make young people aware of good parenting practices and to write a statement to support the way suggested. Several candidates suggested the holding of seminars, showing of appropriate videos, and organizing resource persons to address the youth. While these ways were worthwhile strategies, many candidates did not develop their suggestions fully.

However in several instances, good and sound statements were offered to support the suggestions given. Overall the candidates' performance on this question was satisfactory.

Question 3

This was an unpopular question. It was set on the rights and responsibilities of citizens stated in the constitution of a Caribbean country, the meaning of the term electorate and the differences in electoral systems. Stimulus material showing the election results of an imaginary country was presented and candidates were required to respond to questions.

For the Knowledge part, some candidates were unable to define 'constitution' and 'electorate' adequately. Very few candidates knew the differences between First-Past-the Post system and Proportional representation.

The responses of the candidates to the Interpretation part revealed some awareness of how to interpret election results, determine winners and losers, and, reasons for a political party not contesting a general election.

The Application part asked candidates to suggest a strategy that would promote cooperation among supporters of political parties after an election. Many candidates suggested "handshakes", "peace meetings for supporters" and all inclusive cultural events. The justification statements were weak, unclear and not well developed. Generally, the candidates' performance in this question was less than satisfactory.

Section B: Development and Use of Resources

This section is divided into two parts. Part I consists of two structured questions and Part II consists of two extended essays. Candidates were required to attempt one question from each part of this question.

Part I – Structured questions

Question 4

This question was based on educational institutions and the development of the human resources of a country. For the Knowledge part, candidates were required to state what is meant by 'a country's human resource' and to indicate factors that contribute to the development of human resources in the region. A country's human resources were recognized by several candidates as the skills, talents and abilities of its people, while the factors that assist in the development of this resource were seen as social skills, moral and spiritual values, and the available technologies.

The Interpretation part was more challenging to candidates. Candidates were required to explain how educational institutions contribute to the development of the human resources of a country. Many of the responses offered were vague and lacked development. Typical responses centred on educational institutions developing the knowledge base of young people and the suggestion of career choices. Some candidates vaguely explained how work assisted in enhancing the capabilities of people.

The Application part asked for a way to help young people with learning difficulties and to justify the implementation of its use. A common suggestion offered by candidates was some kind of remediation programme through "extra classes" and the use of technology.

The suggestion offered was however, not fully developed. The justification statement was based on personal experience and the current behaviour in dealing with such problems. The overall performance of the candidates in this question was satisfactory.

Question 5

This question focused on physical resources. First, candidates were required to identify a non-renewable resource and to associate that resource with a CARICOM country. In addition they were required to describe

how water may be used to provide energy. Most candidates who did this question identified the resources gold, bauxite and petroleum and associated the country where they were found accurately. There was little awareness of how to use water from waterfalls and rivers to turn turbines to generate energy. This part of the question was challenging.

The Interpretation part of the question asked for reasons Caribbean countries develop their physical resources. Many reasons focused on earning foreign exchange, job creation and to improve the quality of life of citizens. There were some clear responses with reasonable development that were linked to a better standard of living. A few candidates mentioned that the development of physical resources would help in the establishment of industries.

The Application part required candidates to suggest a measure to promote the use of physical resources for sustainable development. Strategies suggested included reforestation efforts, seminars and workshops to sensitize citizens, and lobby officials to develop monitoring guidelines to encourage sustainable development. However, most of these responses were not well developed. The justification statements were weak.

Part II – Extended Essays

Question 6

This was a popular question. It focused on regional cooperation, its benefits to CARICOM citizens, and why it is necessary in agriculture. Some candidates were able to identify education, health, and trade as areas of cooperation. Some of the benefits of regional cooperation offered by candidates included producing priced goods and services, markets for exports, special hotel rates for citizens and employment opportunities.

The Interpretation part of this question was challenging for some candidates. Candidates were required to provide reasons why cooperation in agriculture is necessary. Several candidates offered food scarcity and high food prices as reasons. Other good responses focused on job creation in agriculture, improvements in quality and quantity of food for citizens, and the export of surplus to earn foreign exchange. However, for the most part the responses lacked clarity and development.

The Application part asked for a way to involve the youth in regional cooperation. Some candidates suggested youth exchange programmes through scholarships, video and teleconferencing opportunities to discuss regional matters, and cultural activities involving the youth. The justification statement was based mainly on the notion that the youth are the leaders of the future. However, several of these responses were unclear and not fully developed. The overall performance of the candidates in this question was unsatisfactory.

Question 7

This question was based on the CARICOM Common Market. Many candidates did not respond to it. For the Knowledge part, candidates were required to define ‘common market’ and to describe benefits of this market to CARICOM manufacturers. Many candidates were unable to define common market. Responses such as “where goods and services are sold”, “fellow partners in trade” and a “market to allow business to cooperate” were common. Correct responses contained the idea of coming together to trade without “hassle” and restrictions. Candidates, however, were able to describe benefits of a common market. Acceptable responses included the removal of tariffs and duties, cheaper commodities, greater productivity and reasonable prices.

For the Interpretation part, candidates were asked to explain CARICOM’s assistance to the smaller states. Many candidates did this part poorly. Responses such as funding, donations, cheaper goods and disaster assistance were offered. Candidates also offered responses that discussed the limited revenue stream, limited human resource capability and smaller markets in these smaller states.

The Application part of the question asked candidates to suggest a way manufacturers may pass on the benefits of the common market to citizens and to state why the way suggested would work. The main suggestion indicated that manufacturers should reduce the prices of goods and sell cheaply to citizens. Suggestions such as

organizing exhibitions and discount cards and coupons were few. On the whole this question was not well done.

Section C – Options

There were three options in this section. One question was set on each option and candidates were required to answer one question from this section. All the questions in this section were attempted. Some questions were more popular than others. Question 10 was most popular.

Consumer Affairs

Question 8

This question focused on ‘disposable income and consumer protection’. For the Knowledge part, candidates were required to state what is meant by disposable income and to list rights and responsibilities consumers should be aware of when shopping. Several candidates were unable to define disposable income. Few candidates knew that it was monies left to a person after taxes and other statutory deductions are made. Most candidates knew the rights and responsibilities of a consumer. Rights such as the be heard, to be informed and to complain were common while responsibilities listed included to shop wisely, to read labels carefully, to buy products that are safe and to check for expiry dates on items.

The Interpretation part posed some challenges to the candidates. This part asked for explanations of why consumer protection agencies are necessary in the Caribbean. Many explanations were based on the methods used by the business community to exploit consumers and some agencies as way to getting redress in these situations, however, these responses were not fully developed and several candidates were unable to gain the full allotted marks.

The Application part asked for a way consumers may manage their disposable income. The most common responses was ‘to make a budget’. Other good responses such as shop around and compare prices and make a shopping list were infrequent. Overall, the performance of the candidates in this question was satisfactory.

Communication

Question 9

This question focused on the mass media. Candidates were required to define the term ‘mass media’, identify types of mass media, and to state the purposes of mass media. Many candidates were able to identify the radio, television, newspapers and the Internet among other correct responses. They were also familiar with the purposes such as to provide information, entertainment and to educate citizens. Candidates handled the knowledge part fairly well.

The Interpretation part asked for the negative effects of the international media on the citizens of the region. Several candidates focused on the crime, violence and pornography seen on some television programmes and the negative effects these have on the behaviour of children and citizens. A few candidates dealt with the negative effects on values and attitudes and lifestyles of citizens. Most of the responses were not developed fully enough to earn full marks.

The Application part asked for a measure to reduce the negative effects and to state why it would be successful in reducing these effects. Responses range from “banning such programmes”, “writing letters of complaint to the international media houses”, and “blocking these programmes” on the television by the use of devices. However these and other acceptable responses were not well developed. The justification statement focused on the effects of a loss of audiences to programmes, and the possibility of media houses effecting positive changes to their shows. Several candidates did not write justification statements. Overall, the performance of the candidates in this question was fair.

Tourism

Question 10

This question attracted a fair number of candidates. It was based on the socio-cultural impact of tourism in the Caribbean. For the Knowledge part, candidates were required to identify cultural events that attract tourists to the region. Several candidates correctly identified carnival, crop over, jazz and music festivals and divali celebrations. Some candidates offered responses that included lesser known events peculiar to their country such as 'yam' and 'jerk' festivals. Candidates had some difficulty to state ways in which tourism has influenced the development of cultural events in the region. Some of the responses focused on foreign exchange earnings, employment for citizens and infrastructural development. No nexus was made in these responses to the development of cultural events. This part of the question was not well done.

The Interpretation part asked for reasons why tourists have an interest in cultural events in the Caribbean. The responses of several candidates were based on the fun and enjoyment experienced by tourists. A few candidates focused on tourists having the opportunity to observe and absorb the culture and the lifestyle of the people. Generally these responses lacked development and candidates were unable to gain full marks.

The Application part asked candidates to suggest one way tourism officials may get tourists to provide feedback on cultural events and to say why these officials should accept the suggestion offered. Several candidates mentioned ways such as interviews and questionnaires. However these and other acceptable ways did not contain clear details and development. The justification statements were weak and unclear. Overall the candidates' performance in this question was moderate.

Paper 03/1: School Based Assessment

Performance in the School Based Assessment component (Paper 03/1) was similar to 2007. The majority of the sample projects were well presented and neatly bound. Some were well researched and produced interesting data.

Some candidates continue to research topics on contemporary issues such as substance abuse, crime, unemployment and pregnancy. Some candidates however, investigated novel topics from across the syllabus. The quality of the methodology used by some candidates indicated some knowledge and understanding of research methods.

While several candidates' projects demonstrated that they were assisted by their respective teachers to present, interpret and analyze data, many candidates did not write clear problem statements nor describe the sampling procedure adequately. Some of the diagrams presented contained inaccuracies and candidates often gave lengthy descriptions and explanations of the data displayed. However, there was general improvement in the presentation, explanation and interpretation of the data provided in the projects.

Candidates who were properly guided were able to establish the link between the data collected and the problem statement and performed well. Many projects reflected clarity and the appropriateness of language. The overall performance in the Paper 03/1 (SBA) was satisfactory.

Paper 03/2: Alternative to the SBA

This paper is set primarily for private candidates. The purpose of this paper is to test candidates' knowledge, understanding, and application of basic research skills and methodologies. They were five questions in this paper and candidates were required to respond to all of them. Some candidates however did not do so.

Candidates were required to select one of the topics given and to respond to the questions that followed. They were also required to construct a rationale for the topic they selected, to write problem statements, to formulate research questions, to identify appropriate research instruments, to define concepts, to identify a suitable

sample, and to present, analyze and interpret data. In addition, a case study was presented to further assess some of these skills as well as the candidates' ability to evaluate information and make appropriate conclusion and recommendations.

Several candidates were able to comprehend research terminologies and to respond adequately to the demands of the questions. These candidates offered acceptable problem statements, named data gathering instruments and formulated good research questions. However, many candidates did not know about pretesting data-gathering instruments nor could offer valid reasons why the research instruments they named in their responses were appropriate. Several candidates, however, identified sample groups that were relevant to the topic chosen.

The case study required candidates to apply their knowledge of research. Many candidates were able to state the focus of the investigation in the case study and its findings. They also displayed the statistical data appropriately and made conclusions and recommendations based on the findings. Some candidates had difficulty using the data provided in the case study, and suggesting further areas that are researchable.

Basic Proficiency

Paper 02 – Structured Questions

The Basic Proficiency examination consisted of 9 questions. Candidates were required to answer two questions from Section A, two questions from Section B and one question from Section C. A few candidates responded to all 9 questions on the paper. Responses varied in quality and were indicative of the level the preparedness of candidates.

In Section A, Questions 1 and 2 were popular. In Section B, Questions 4 was a popular choice of candidates. In Section C, no question appeared to be very popular. Few candidates were able to develop statements when asked to describe; to give reasons, or to explain. Candidates had difficulty in defining concepts, and offering responses that were relevant and appropriate to the questions on the paper.

Section A: Individual Interaction

There were three questions in this section. Candidates were required to answer any two questions.

Question 1

This question was based on the family. The Knowledge part tested the candidates understanding of the concept 'family', as well as its functions. Several candidates indicated that a family is "related by blood" and consists of parents and children living together in the same house.

The Interpretation part asked candidates to explain ways parents teach their children in the home. Many candidates focused their responses on the behaviour of parents in society generally, rather than on the things parents do in the home to teach children. Good responses such as providing opportunities for children to show responsibility and setting good examples were rare.

The Application part asked candidates to suggest one strategy that may be introduced in the workplace to help working mothers to justify the strategy suggested. This part was poorly done. The notion of day care facilities in the work place was mentioned but was not clearly explained. The performance of many candidates in this question generally was unsatisfactory.

Question 2

This question was attractive to candidates. It tested the candidates' knowledge of parenting skills and the qualities of a good parent. Candidates' responses to the knowledge part focused on "duties" of parents rather than the 'qualities' of good parents. Several responses stated that "parents should send their children to school"

and “care and love them”. Responses on the training needed to develop parenting skills were based on “knowing how to change diapers” and “how to cook”.

The Interpretation part asked for reasons why young people needed to prepare for parenthood. Most candidates handled this part fairly well. Many correct responses related to teenagers having children and being unable to cope with the child rearing problems, and that young people are the future fathers and mothers of the next generation.

The Application part asked for a strategy that a PTA could implement to assist parents to develop good parenting skills and to suggest why the strategy would be useful. Many candidates focused on providing “information to parents of the child’s performance in school and the teachers’ behaviour”. A few candidates however provided strategies related to seminars and workshops on parenting. Few candidates provided a supporting statement for the strategy they suggested. The overall performance of the candidates in this question was weak.

Question 3

This question was unpopular. It focused on institutions. For the knowledge part, candidates were required to name economic and educational institutions and to state their functions. Many candidates handled this part very well.

The Interpretation part asked for reasons why the church is an important institution in society. Some of the reasons provided were focused on teaching people about God and bringing people together. Most of these reasons were unclear and not well developed.

The Application part asked candidates to suggest a way church leaders may help young people who have left school and to state why the suggestion would be helpful. Some suggestions by the candidates included counselling, advice and teaching about God. In several instances these suggestions were not well developed nor were the justification statements clear and relevant. Overall the performance of the candidates in this question was fair.

Section B: Development and use of Resources

Question 4

This question tested candidates’ knowledge of resources. They were asked to identify renewable resources, to name CARICOM countries that produce non-renewable energy resources and to state the purposes for which energy resources are used in the Caribbean. Several candidates offered examples of renewable resources such as timber, land and vegetables. The CARICOM country named was Trinidad and the purpose for which energy resources were used included cooking, generating electricity and fuel for cars.

The Interpretation part asked for reasons why it is important for the Caribbean to develop renewable resources. Most of the responses to this part related to foreign exchange earnings and self-sufficiency in food. However these responses were not well developed. A few candidates mentioned the creation of jobs for the people.

The Application part asked what strategy a government may use to encourage energy conservation. Responses for the most part referred to conserving electricity by “turning off the lights and appliances when not in use”. Better responses focused on holding public meetings to inform the people and advertising in the media about conserving energy. The overall performance in this question was weak.

Question 5

This question focused on life expectancy, infant mortality and a good health care system. For the Knowledge part, candidates were asked to define the terms ‘life expectancy’ and ‘infant mortality’ and to outline factors responsible for high infant mortality rates. Several candidates could not define these concepts clearly. The

factors for high infant mortality rate outlined by many candidates included “unprotected sex” and teenage pregnancy. Correct responses such as lack of immunization and unhealthy foods were far and few.

The Interpretation part asked for reasons for a good health care system. Most of the candidates’ responses to this part were unclear, vague and undeveloped.

The Application part required candidates to suggest a way to help mothers to have healthy babies and to state why this way would be successful. Several candidates focused on providing exercise and good food. Suggestions such as seminars on health and a clean home environment were rare. The justification statement was often unrelated and unclear. On the whole the question was poorly done.

Question 6

This question was based on CARICOM and cooperation among Caribbean countries. It was not popular. Candidates who attempted this question were unable to identify the member countries of CARICOM and the member countries of the OECS while Canada and England were identified as members of CARICOM by some candidates.

The Interpretation part was poorly done. Many candidates were unable to explain ways CARICOM member states benefit from trading. Few candidates stated benefits such as the removal of duties and taxes and more jobs for citizens.

The Application part was poorly answered. Candidates were asked to suggest ways to inform citizens about goods and services. The few suggestions offered were impractical and lacked substance. These responses were incoherent and vague. The overall performance of the candidates in this question was poor.

Section C: Options

Consumer Affairs

Question 7

This question was based on the use of credit cards. Candidates were asked to state the use of credit cards and the problems consumer face when using these cards. Their responses to this part were satisfactory. Clear and precise responses such as “to pay for goods bought”, to withdraw money from banks and to do internet shopping were given. Some of the problems stated were overspending by consumers, “bandits stealing these cards” and the cards “stuck in the ATM machines”.

The Interpretation part asked why banks advise consumers to use credit cards. This part was not well done. Only a few candidates stated that credit cards were safer than carrying cash to shop. Many candidates attempted to link their responses to the uses of the card for this part of the question.

The Application part asked for a measure that may assist consumers who use credit cards. Some candidates stated that there should be programmes on the television to teach consumers how to use these cards. Other candidates mentioned meetings with consumers. Most of the responses to this part were vague and unclear and many candidates did not write any response. On the whole the overall performance to this question was poor.

Communication

Question 8

This question focused on the technology used in the communication process. The Knowledge part asked candidates to identify products of technology other than cellular phones that are used for communication. Many candidates correctly identified computers, beepers and radio. On the other hand, several candidates were unable to describe factors responsible for the increase in cellular phone use in the Caribbean. Some candidates touched on “cheap rates” and “packages” for prepaid and post paid cell phones.

The Interpretation part asked for the benefits of using cellular phones. A common response was the “cell phone could be used in many locations”, “to play music and games” and “to send text messages”. Generally this part was fairly well done.

Candidates responded well to the Application part. Candidates suggested measures ranging from “searching all students” to placing security cameras to monitor the use of cell phones. Once again many of the responses to this part were based on the candidates’ personal experiences in the school system. Overall the responses to this question was reasonable.

Tourism

Question 9

This question was based on the tourism industry. Candidates were required to define the term ‘tourist’, name tourist destinations in the Commonwealth Caribbean and to list jobs young persons may get in hotels for the Knowledge profile. Several candidates defined a tourist correctly and were able to name tourist destinations such as St. Lucia, Jamaica and Barbados. The hotel jobs listed were cooks, bartenders, maids and secretaries.

The Interpretation part asked why training was necessary for young people before they were employed in the tourism industry. Popular responses focussed on “knowing the facts or history of the place”, and knowing how to express themselves when dealing with tourists. Some candidates offered no responses to this part.

The Application part asked for an action tourism officials may take to encourage young people to work in the tourism industry and to state why the action would be successful. A few candidates suggested seminars and apprenticeship programmes. Others suggested “tours” for young people. Suggestions were for the most part unclear and not fully developed. Most of the responses to this question were unsatisfactory.

Suggestions To Teachers

Candidates who are entered for CSEC Social Studies examinations must have a clear understanding of the terms and concepts stated in the syllabus. This knowledge and understanding facilitates correct responses to questions. The use of everyday experiences to define these terms and concept is insufficient. Most available textbooks and resource material highlight or contain glossaries of these major terms and concepts. The following are useful reminders:

1. All instructions are clearly stated on the examinations papers and should be followed.
2. Candidates should be thoughtful in the choice of questions in each section of Paper 02.
3. Teachers should advise candidates that marks are allotted to all parts of a question. All parts of a question therefore should be attempted.
4. The selection of SBA projects for submission to CXC should adhere to the guidelines set out by the Measurement and Evaluation Division of the Council.
5. Candidates should be familiar with basic research terms and methodologies.
6. SBA Project topics should be generated from across the syllabus, should be original, and should follow the guidelines set out in the syllabus.