

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2008**

**COMMUNICATION STUDIES
(TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO)**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates' performance this year was quite good. The performance in all three Modules – Gathering and Processing Information, Language and Community, and Listening and Speaking – improved.

There is a concern about candidates' ability to critically read the requirements of the comprehensions, both aural and written. Candidates appear unable to select the specific answers and illustrations from the passage to substantiate their answers. There continues to be the tendency for candidates to use jargon indiscriminately. Candidates must pay more attention to the actual identification of relevant devices and techniques rather than creating a blanket list with the hope of actually including a correct response.

Although most candidates used paragraphs in their essay writing, there is a serious lack of coherency in these paragraphs. Candidates therefore need to pay closer attention to the basic rules of paragraphing. There is also the continued absence of proof-reading by candidates of their own work which could lead to an improvement in written pieces.

DETAILED COMMENTS

PAPER 01A

Module 1 Section A

This section was fairly well done. However, the performance in Question 1 was somewhat disappointing. The mean for this question was 3.94 as compared to the 6.04 mean for Question 2. Most candidates were able to correctly identify the various methods of carrying out the survey but Question 1 Part (b) was not as well handled. Question 2 was generally well handled and only a few candidates failed to score marks for this question.

Module 2 Section B

Question 3

This question posed a challenge to some candidates. The word 'attitudes' seemed to present a challenge to some candidates and as a result they wrote about their own experiences rather than address the way the characters in the scenario felt. Candidates should be reminded that when a scenario is given as a stimulus for a question they should respond to that stimulus.

Part (b) of this question was generally well handled by candidates.

Part (c) of this question about language was simple and straightforward and the answers can be found in the syllabus document.

Question 4

This question was well handled by the candidates as demonstrated by the mean of 6.70.

Question 5

This question was also generally well done by candidates.

Question 6

This question was surprisingly not well done by candidates. The purposes of language are detailed in the syllabus as well as found in any text on communication.

Module 3 Section C

Question 7

Candidates did quite well on this question. Candidates need to be comfortable with discussing the importance of the aspects or elements of the communication process.

Question 8

Part (b) posed some challenges to candidates. The word “delivery” caused difficulty, as many did not interpret it to have reference to how Dr. Blake **said** or performed his speech. This term should be a familiar aspect of the preparation for the students’ own delivery of their internal assessment speech.

Part (c) also posed difficulty, as candidates appeared unfamiliar with the idea of organizing their writing. This question asked candidates to recognise what they themselves need to use when writing, that is sequential paragraphs, an introduction, a conclusion and linkages.

Question 9

Part (d) posed challenges for some candidates, as some did not see any weakness in the sign. As a result some candidates wrote the same sign in the box provided. This question is asking candidates to be aware of the way language works or does not work in their community and as such they should be able to recognise the barrier to understanding and correct the sign to improve communication. Practical examples are around us everyday and should be used in class for students to improve the messages being delivered. Example, POST NO BILLS. What does this sign mean? Does it have more than one meaning? Can it be rewritten to be specific to its intent? These are the type of assignments that could make a similar question very easy for candidates to handle.

Question 10

This question was fairly well done by candidates. There are still too many candidates who do not know the contexts of communication. The response to Part (a) can be found in the syllabus. The term channel presented some difficulties for the candidates and a closer analysis of this term needs to be encouraged. The final question on the paper was quite simple as the term mass media should be familiar to all candidates.

PAPER 01B

Last year's report spoke to the fact that for the first time a significant number of candidates from a number of centres/territories had the listening comprehension passage written verbatim on their scripts. This obtained again this year. Although the piece was a poem and somewhat easy to remember most candidates would not have, under normal reading circumstances, been able to write the complete poem. Therefore, attention must be paid to the rate and amount of time given to candidates between readings. This piece must not be read as if it were a dictation. Since this paper is supposed to test the candidates' ability to listen and then recall information, those with the poem written would have an unfair advantage in answering questions. This practice must stop as it contravenes the directives given on the Examiner's script.

There was some improvement in the performance on this paper this year but there remain some critical problems that need to be addressed.

Question 1

Candidates seem unaware of how to identify the main idea. There appears to be no distinction in the mind of the candidate between the main idea and purpose/intent of the writer. Too many candidates simply wrote chunks of the poem as a response hoping to somehow include the answer. This weakness resulted in few candidates scoring full marks for question 1 on this paper.

Question 2

Part (a) (ii) required candidates to select two phrases from the poem. Surprisingly, candidates appear unable to differentiate between phrases and sentences. Again, candidates appeared unable to be highly specific in their response.

Part (b) required candidates to give two examples of rhyme. Rhyme by its nature alone requires that two words must be identified in order that rhyme can occur thus two examples of rhyme would entail the use of four words. Candidates need to think through their responses to questions posed.

Question 3

Again candidates wrote complete sentences, seemingly unsure as to what constituted the metaphor. This device is one of the most basic literary devices used in prose and poetry and thus should pose no difficulty for candidates at this level.

Question 4

This question proved to be quite challenging to the candidates. Whilst some candidates understood what the question required they were still unable to express themselves clearly. Many candidates were unable to explain the effectiveness of the metaphor as used in the poem. Far too many of them examined the metaphor without reference to the specific context. There were also far too many candidates who appeared to have no idea what effectiveness means. This problem with the Paper 01B does not appear to be addressed in the teaching; thus, greater attention needs to be paid to this aspect of the teaching of Communication Studies.

PAPER 02

Candidates' performance in this paper was generally good but there were areas of weakness that will be discussed for each specific question.

MODULE 1

Question 1

Once again the difference between the main point and the purpose seems to elude candidates. More attention needs to be paid to this aspect of the syllabus.

Many candidates made reference to strategies without giving examples or providing a sustained discussion of how the strategies linked to the writer's purpose. Many other candidates produced a generic analysis commenting on the discourse type, dialectal variation without answering the question. Some candidates spent valuable time demonstrating why the extract could not be described as one discourse type or the other while failing to state what strategies or techniques the writer had used.

There were too many instances where candidates summarized or paraphrased the passage with little attempt at answering the question. There were also too many instances where use of full stops, capital letters and correct spelling were pointed out as techniques used by the writer. The repeated use of this incorrect analysis suggests a need for teachers to correct this misconception.

Candidates should take note of the name of the writer so as to avoid making the error of attributing a sexual bias against males when in fact the article was written by a male.

MODULE 2

Question 2

Candidates' performance in this section was satisfactory. The major difficulty with this question is that candidates referred to such terms as acrolect, mesolect, phonemics and syntax but they did not appear to fully understand their meanings. Candidates appear to believe that profane language exists on the language continuum. It is imperative that candidates be taught the correct use of these terminologies.

The part of the question that asked how film would capture communicative behaviours was the weakest part of the response. The use of technology allows for many nuances to be explored. The candidate is supposed to explore a televised version and as such reference must be made as to how technology allows communicative behaviours to be enhanced. A simple reference to facial expression and hearing the words spoken cannot suffice as an answer. Thus, the candidate is being asked how can television bring out the behaviours to the viewer? Those who did well on this section of the question made reference to the mother's movements or stance displaying her anger and the sheepish expression on the boy's face when he tells Wordsworth that they won't be buying the poem. These examples deal with the specifics of the passage as opposed to a generic prepared response that has no bearing on the question at hand. Specific reference must be made to allow the examiner to appreciate what technology would enhance.

MODULE 3

Question 3

Generally, this question was done very well. Many candidates demonstrated a high level of writing skill. Paragraphing, use of transitions and well executed conclusions were all evident. However, the practice of using text-messaging language has crept into the examination booklets. This must be stamped out from the classroom level and students must be encouraged to recognise the social context of language. Ironically, this objective is being tested in this paper.

Candidates need to recognise the difference between writing a speech and an essay. The techniques differ. In a speech one would expect to find strategies such as repetition, rhetorical questions, emotional and direct appeals to the audience. Some candidates also wrote about the negatives and positives of cell phone use, a clear misreading of the question.

Additionally, candidates need not miss a line if they indent to signal a new paragraph.

INTERNALASSESSMENT

The Portfolio

Overall, there was an improvement in the presentation of the portfolios. Most candidates selected themes that could be dealt with in a creative and imaginative manner. Although there were portfolios that looked at the over done themes like rape, abortion, homosexuality and incest, these were in the minority. Of concern is the continued use of profanity by candidates.

Reflective

Candidates showed insight and creativity in the presentation of their theme of choice. In addition to writing there were pieces of artwork or woodwork created to enhance the presentations.

One recurring problem is the failure of candidates to clearly state a situation and target audience with whom they wished to share their information. In many instances “situation” in the rationale was interpreted to mean the setting in which the incident took place or the context in which the action takes place rather than the situation/context in which the production/creation would be shared, for example, a magazine. Candidates also need to follow the current syllabus requirement of a rationale that should include why they chose to write about the selected theme.

In creating the reflective pieces, candidates should ensure that these contain the elements of the selected genre. Hence, the language used by the characters in a story for example should reflect the character’s status and emotions. Plots need to be structured in such a way as to embrace the variations/varieties of language registers and communicative behaviours. They must also reflect the theme. When candidates set out to use argumentative or persuasive writing, they should also employ literary and /or persuasive techniques.

The Language Analysis

While many candidates demonstrated an understanding of the task to be completed, others showed a distinct lack of knowledge of the linguistic components/features and produced either a literary analysis or focused on the sentence structure and literary devices used. The syllabus clearly points to the elements that should be discussed for this part of the portfolio. Language variation, attitudes to language, communicative behaviours are all listed as the elements of this discussion. Candidates must submit a copy of the piece that they have analysed whether it is their original work or one that they have sourced. A reminder that if the candidate chooses a piece it must fit into the theme chosen.

Other Comments

Schools are encouraged to ensure that teachers are using the current syllabus. It seems some new teachers are not fully cognizant of the requirements of the course.

Candidates should ensure that watermarks do not detract from the presentation and that pieces remain legible. They should also use colours and fonts that are reader friendly. Teachers need to ensure that the names and grades on the com-3 form correspond with the samples submitted.

Teachers who encounter instances of plagiarism or non-submission of internal assessments should mark the scripts in the former case and place the mark on the Com-3. The marking should not be left for the moderator.

PAPER 03B

Alternative Paper

Candidates still appear somewhat unprepared to meet the requirements of this paper.

Module 1

Question 1

Part (a) asks candidates to produce a summary of 60 words; however, the word limit was often ignored and candidates attempted to write the complete extract or some of the extract without paying attention to finding the main points.

Part (b) was not well done either. In analysing credibility the candidate must speak to the source of the article, the references made, that is, to government agencies, the provision of the website and to illustrate the weakness in credibility. Some reference should be made to the lack of statistical information. Candidates needed to address such issues as bias, source and research in analyzing the credibility of the information.

Module 2

Question 2

Once again, this question was rather badly done by most candidates. There appeared to be little understanding of the terms detailed in the question: dialectal variation, communicative behaviours, attitudes to language and use of register. Therefore, some candidates either summarized the extract or tried to explain what they thought was taking place in the extract.

A good answer to Part (i) of this question should include discussion on the use of English Creole by the writer and some characters while Standard English is used by Ivan Morton. Examples should be given to support this response.

The discussion on attitudes to language should include reference to the fact that Lovelace, the author, believes in the power of the Creole to carry his narrative.

A discussion on Eva and Bee's attitude to Creole should follow and then Morton's attitude to Standard English and English Creole.

Communicative behaviours refer to the body language and other non-verbal clues to the persons attitudes and feelings. This should also be fully discussed.

Private Candidates should be using the Communication Studies study guide which explains the terms used in this type of question.

Module 3

This question performed fairly well. Candidates were able to address most of the areas detailed here. The areas of weakness were in discussing the writer's style and in determining what the writer hopes to achieve.

CONCLUSION

Sharing of skills and ideas remains the one sure way to improve the teaching and learning in Communication Studies. The recommended activities listed in the syllabus often ask for group work but teachers apparently fail to see that team teaching or sharing of ideas would achieve the same purpose of team work, that is, a sharing and pooling of ideas. In some cases the problems observed in the performance in this subject can be improved by teacher knowledge and thus the onus is on teachers to research the content of the syllabus and become more familiar, especially in the area of Creole language and its sources. Candidates also need to be encouraged to read current articles in magazines and the newspaper as they appear to find the articles on the examination paper difficult to comprehend. Students must also be encouraged to appreciate the importance of effective communication as a skill for life as opposed to passing an examination.