

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

JANUARY 2005

OFFICE PROCEDURES

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GENERAL COMMENTS

There was again, as in January 2004, an increase in the candidate population for Office Procedures for the January sitting. Candidate entries this year totaled 797 compared to 763 in 2004. 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.

Candidates' responses in all three papers for this examination indicated a satisfactory coverage of the syllabus. The performance in the questions testing the compulsory units of the syllabus improved over that of past years; however, in some of the optional units some candidates produced less than satisfactory work. These areas are addressed in the detailed comments on individual questions.

Paper 01 - Multiple Choice

This paper tested the knowledge and application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and clerical routines. Candidates' performance in this paper improved over the performance in both the January and June 2004 examinations. The overall mean of the paper in the 2005 examination was 39.42 compared with 35.54 and 38.84 for January and June 2004 respectively. Marks ranged from 0 to 57 out of a maximum of 60.

Paper 02 - Essay

This paper consisted of two sections. Section I consisted of four compulsory questions based on Units I to VI and XII of the syllabus. The compulsory questions were attempted by the majority of the candidates.

Section II consisted of four optional questions based on Units VII to XI. The knowledge and application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and office routines were tested. Candidates were required to answer two questions from this section. Candidates' performance in this paper declined compared with that of January 2004. The overall mean for this Paper was 42.49 compared with 47.87 in 2004. Marks ranged from 6 to 74 out of a maximum of 90.

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 have been unable to complete SBA projects as school candidates. The paper was designed to test the candidates' ability to use their personal experiences of routine office activities acquired through observation, or from doing the actual office tasks as employees. The paper consisted of ten short essay-type questions based on an office case. For this examination the case focused on and tested Units I and XII of the syllabus.

Candidates' performance in this paper showed a noticeable improvement compared with the number of performance in January 2004. There was a 9.38 percentage increase in passes. It is noted however, that some areas continue to pose difficulties to candidates and affect their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 31.68 out of a maximum of 50. Marks ranged from 3 to 49 out of a maximum of 50.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 - Essay

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

Question 1

This question tested Unit I Objective 4 and Unit II Objectives 15 and 19.

For Part (a), candidates were required to complete a diagram that depicted the 'Functions of the General Office', and to show three functions that are performed on a day-to-day basis. Performance on this question was satisfactory as most of the candidates were able to identify the functions of the general office and were therefore able to score full marks.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were asked to state two services used to dispatch mail. This was worth 2 marks. The majority of the candidates were only able to identify one service. Candidates were expected to state services such as the postal and courier services.

In Part (b) (ii), candidates were required to identify the type of inland postal service that would be appropriate for sending letters containing valuable articles and sending mail to travelers who have no fixed addresses. This was also worth 2 marks. The majority of the candidates were

able to answer this question. However, some were unfamiliar with the word 'courier' and some were unable to spell 'poste restante'.

For Part (c), candidates were given an instance where, in their role as a mail clerk, they were asked to assist in setting up an automated mail room to adequately handle all incoming and outgoing correspondence. They were required to identify four pieces of modern equipment which would be recommended for the automated mailroom. In the second part of the question they were to state how each piece of equipment selected would enhance productivity. This was worth 8 marks. The performance on this part of the question was satisfactory. However, some candidates ignored the words 'automated mail room' and provided responses that were more appropriate to a manual operation. Equipment for an automated mail room would include for example: addressing machine, franking machine, letter opener, and sealing machine. Teachers should urge students to read questions very carefully and to underline key words before attempting the question.

The overall performance in this question was satisfactory. Some candidates were able to earn full marks in Parts (a) and (b). Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15, and the mean was 6.40.

Question 2

This question tested Unit III, Objectives 3 and 4 and Unit IV, Objectives 1 and 5.

For Part (a), candidates were required to list three duties that a file clerk is expected to perform in the Records Management Office. This was answered fairly well. Candidates supplied responses such as: Preparing, filing and retrieving documents, ensuring that files are properly maintained, and keeping the filing area tidy and well organized.

For Part (b), candidates were asked to state the filing system that would be most appropriate for situations that related to a list of students' names, a database for sales staff who travel, insurance contracts and for correspondence kept by a landlord concerning a variety of subjects. This was answered fairly well.

For Part (c), candidates were required to assume that they worked for an organization that had been receiving a number of complaints from customers with regard to poor service from its employees. Candidates were required to write a memorandum to the office staff and outline two major

complaints, indicate two suggestions for improving the quality of service and one likely consequence if further complaints were received. Some candidates wrote a letter instead of a memorandum. In other instances, they did not follow the guidelines that were provided in the question and as a result provided material that was irrelevant. For example, the complaints/problems were not identified and suggestions for improving the quality of the service were very weak. Thus, marks were lost in both instances.

For Part (d), candidates were asked to identify two planning aids that would assist the new receptionist to establish priorities and complete tasks on time. Performance in this part of the question was poor. Candidates seemed to be unaware of the term 'planning aids'. The better candidates listed aids such as: record book, computerized follow-up systems to ensure completion of tasks and a year planner chart.

The overall performance in this question was, however, satisfactory. Marks ranged from 0 to 15, and the mean was 7.18.

Question 3

This question tested Unit V, Objectives 2 and 3 and Unit VI, Objectives 2 and 3.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were asked to give one reason for conducting an annual general meeting.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were to state two activities that an Administrative Assistant would perform in each situation, before, during and after a meeting. This was worth 6 marks. Performance on part (a) of this question was quite good, with many candidates scoring full marks.

In Part (b), candidates were provided with a trip itinerary for travel between Jamaica and Barbados. Candidates were asked to furnish responses to a series of questions that related to the information provided within the itinerary.

The performance on this part of the question was satisfactory. However, some candidates experienced difficulties with time zone differences and computations with regard to the days the traveller would be away from his country of residence. The better candidates accurately computed: (ii) that the traveller would be away from his country of residence for 8 days (May 8-15), and (iv) that the duration of the flight would be 4 hours.

The overall performance in this question was good. Marks ranged from 1 to 14, and the mean was 7.79.

Question 4

The question tested Unit I, Objective 4 and Unit XII, Objectives 3, and 6.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were asked to identify two skills that an office worker should possess in order to operate modern office equipment effectively. Many candidates misunderstood the word 'skills' and gave tasks/duties as their responses. Teachers need to emphasize the difference between skills required for a job and the duties performed. Candidates were expected to identify skills such as: technical competence or know how, literacy skills (computer, reading, and numeric) and interpersonal skills.

For Part (ii), candidates were to state two ways that a worker could contribute to achieving the organization's goals. For Part (iii), candidates were to state three items of information that a prospective employee should research in preparation for a job interview. These two parts of the question were handled fairly well.

For Part (b), candidates were provided with the following situation:

Assume that you are Sashay Towers of 19 Hartford Drive, Lakemore Gardens, St. James, Antigua. You have already written seven subjects at the CXC examinations this year and are awaiting your results. In the meantime, you are seeking a job as a data-entry clerk at a computer firm.

Candidates were required to write a letter of application. A large percentage of candidates were unable to write mailable letters. Many did not utilize the information that was provided in the question. Some other common errors were the absence of a dateline, inside address to the Human Resource Manager, salutation and complimentary close. Emphasis should be given to letter writing, particularly an application letter, as many of the candidates will be seeking jobs after graduation.

The overall performance in this question was satisfactory. Marks ranged from 1 to 15, and the mean was 8.41.

Section II - Optional Questions

Question 5

This question tested Unit VII, Objectives 2 and 3 and Unit VIII, Objective 2

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to list two duties of a clerk in the Human Resource Office. Many candidates confused the duties of the clerk in the Human Resource Office with that of the Human Resource Manager. The clerk's responsibilities would be limited to: preparing and interpreting human resource records, using telephone, fax or computer to communicate with persons with regard to training courses and engagement of staff, and keeping information confidentially.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were to state two statutory provisions for the protection of employees at the workplace. The responses of the majority of candidates indicated that the meaning of the word 'statutory' that is, prescribed or authorized by law was not clear to them. Statutory means prescribed or authorized by law. Statutory provisions would include: protective clothing and gear, workmen's compensation, sanitary facilities, proper lighting and ventilation, provision of a first aid kit, safe and healthy working environment...

For Part (b) (i), candidates were supplied with a pay sheet form for employees. The hours worked, basic overtime pay rates and deductions were provided. Candidates were asked to complete the week's basic, overtime, gross pay and net pay. This question was very popular and the majority of candidates were able to obtain close to full marks. Some candidates, however, did not calculate accurately the overtime pay.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were asked to complete the cheque form provided. This was well done. Candidates need to be reminded however, that they should desist from using their names.

This question was a popular choice. It was attempted by 83 per cent of the candidates. Marks ranged from 1 to 15, and the mean was 8.41.

Question 6

This question tested Unit VIII, Objectives 1 and 7.

For Part (a), candidates were asked to give three reasons why a firm would need to audit its accounts. For Part (b), candidates were to state

three functions of the Accounts office other than auditing. Performance on Parts (a) and (b) was satisfactory.

For Part (c), candidates were provided with a bank statement. They were asked to interpret specified information on the document. This segment of the question presented some challenges to the majority of candidates who attempted it. The lettered asterisks indicated:

- *A-the name of the firm that has an account with the ABC bank
- *B-description of the transactions carried out during the month
- *C- a credit balance brought forward from the previous month for Stationery and Supplies Ltd.
- *D- sundries could represent cash of \$200 paid into the account to increase the amount
- *E- represents the amount on cheque#20 for \$410.00 paid out effecting a reduced balance
- *F- represents insufficient funds thus canceling the credit entry
- *G -represents an overdraft, thus a negative balance for the firm

In Part (d), candidates were asked what would be the result, if in a department they neglected to make requisitions for supplies on time. Candidates' performance in this question was satisfactory.

This question was attempted by 35 per cent of the candidates. Marks ranged from 0 to 15, and the mean was 7.14.

Question 7

The question tested Unit IX, Objective 2 and Unit X, Objective 4.

For Part (a), candidates were to identify four duties of a clerk in the purchasing department. Candidates' responses to this part of the question were good. Most were able to attain full marks. However, a few candidates identified the duties of the clerk in the general office rather than in the purchasing office. The duties of the clerk in the purchasing department include: preparing and processing purchase requisitions, filing of purchasing records and retrieving when needed, maintaining an index of suppliers, maintaining stock records, and writing letters of enquiry to potential suppliers.

For Part (b), candidates were asked to state two reasons for issuing a proforma invoice. Many candidates were unable to answer this question. The majority of the candidates' responses did not earn them marks. Candidates confused the proforma invoice with the invoice. Additionally, many

candidates did not know the reason for issuing a proforma invoice. A proforma invoice is an invoice issued before an order is placed or before the goods are delivered giving all details and the cost of the goods. The reasons for issuing such an invoice are: to accompany goods sent out on approval or on consignment, and to inform the addressee of the price and charges should the goods be retained; if the goods are being sent abroad a proforma invoice may be required by the customs authorities for declaring the amount of the consignment; serves as quotations for dealers who are contemplating the introduction of a new sales line, for accurate and full particulars, which will show them if they can trade profitably. Teachers should pay particular attention to this area of the syllabus.

For Part (c), candidates were asked to interpret information on a completed sales invoice. This was worth 7 marks. This question was well done. Some candidates were able to gain full marks. The areas that were correctly labeled by most candidates were: the invoice number, the customer's name and address, the order number, and the discount offered. The areas which proved difficult were: the date, where many candidates gave the date the goods were to be delivered; the abbreviation E&OE, where many candidates thought that these letters were initials.

For Part (d), candidates were asked to address a situation where paper was ordered but not supplied in the correct quantities. Candidates were asked to indicate the action to be taken and give reasons. This question was not well done. Many candidates confused the debit note and the credit note and many also provided weak and unreasoned solutions to the problem.

This question was attempted by 41 per cent of the candidates. Marks ranged from 0 to 13, and the mean was 6.29.

Question 8

This question tested Unit X, Objective 5 and Unit XI, Objective 5.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were to identify three documents that a clerk in the Dispatch and Transport Office prepares in the distribution of goods to customers.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were to list three duties other than tying, filing, preparing documents and answering the telephone that the clerk in the Transport Office performs.

Candidates' performance in part (a) was satisfactory.

For Part (b) candidates were presented with the following situation:

In response to a newspaper advertisement, Mr. Smart, a sole trader, bought 100 shirts @ \$100.00 each from a leading garment outlet.

Candidates were asked specific questions on the situation. Some candidates, in their responses, were unable to compute trade discount and cash discount to earn the marks allocated.

In Part (c), candidates were to calculate GCT (a value added tax), and the final value and cost of the item. This was worth 5 marks. The overall performance on this question was satisfactory.

This question was the least popular question in the optional section of the paper. It was attempted by 26 per cent of the candidates. Marks ranged from 0 to 13, and the mean was 4.86. The mean on this question was also the lowest for the entire paper.

Paper 03/2 General Proficiency

The Alternative to the School-Based Assessment

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

The Case

The case provided a profile of an individual named Winnie Smart who was an enterprising individual. She possessed positive attitudes and traits that complemented her business acumen. With determination she successfully pursued a job search and acquired further skills. Winnie eventually established the company called Business Technology & Innovative Services (BTIS). It became the country's leading outlet for state-of-the-art office equipment and provided quality service to its customers.

Performance in this Paper was good. However, some questions proved to be difficult for the candidates. Many candidates performed poorly on question 4. This question required candidates to perform a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis of BTIS could have included:

Strength: Managerial experience, technical expertise, good network/communication with customers, distribution system, new improvements of product/s.

Weakness: No control over spare parts, limited product life, comparatively high prices, inadequate technical support.

Opportunity: Few and weak competitors, rising income of target market, growing demand, technical assistance available

Threat: Government bureaucracy, spare parts shortages, natural disasters, changing government regulations.

Candidates also performed poorly on question 9. Candidates were asked to supply five questions for a questionnaire on the topic "Impact of Modern Technology on Office machines". Possible questions could have included:

- What is your position in the organization?
- What are the different types of technology used in your organization?
- What benefits are derived from the introduction of the new technology?
- Has the rate of production of documents improved due to installation of technology?
- Is the work made easier due to the introduction of modern machines?

The overall performance on the paper was good. Marks ranged from 3 to 49. Approximately 51.4 per cent of the candidates obtained marks at the upper end of the mark scale which indicated performances ranging from satisfactory to outstanding.

