

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

JANUARY 2010

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The General Proficiency Office Administration examination is offered in January and May/June each year. Three papers were offered at the General Proficiency level:

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Paper 3/2 – Alternative to School Based Assessment (SBA)

In January 2010 approximately 1,720 candidates registered for the General Proficiency examination, compared with approximately 920 in 2009. About 51 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I to III, compared with 75 per cent in 2009. The mean score for the examination was 83.2 out of a maximum available score of 200.

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Candidates' performance in the 2010 examination declined compared with January 2009. The mean for this paper was 33.8 compared with 36.5 in January 2009. The maximum score was 55 out of a maximum available score of 60.

Paper 02 – Short Answer

This paper consisted of two sections. Section I comprised four compulsory questions covering Modules I–VI and Module XII. Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Modules VII–XI. Knowledge and the application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and office routines were tested. Candidates were required to answer two questions from Section II. The overall mean for this paper was 34.0 compared with 39.2 in 2009. The maximum score was 69 out of a maximum available score of 90.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to SBA

This paper took the form of a written examination that targeted private candidates who would not have 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 questions based on an office case. For this examination the case focused on Unit V of the syllabus.

In this paper, candidates' performance was unsatisfactory. It is noted that some areas continue to challenge candidates and affect their overall performance. The mean score for this paper was 14.9 compared with 24.9 in 2009. The maximum score was 36 out of a maximum available score of 50.

DETAILED COMMENTS**Paper 02 – Short Answer****Compulsory Section**Question 1

This question tested Module I, Objectives 1, 2 (a, b) and Objective 5 (e).

For Part (a), candidates were required to list four functions of the office in an organization. Candidates were generally able to identify two to three functions and gave responses such as ‘collecting’, ‘processing’, ‘disseminating’ and ‘distributing’. This section of the question was worth 4 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were required to state three ways in which an office worker can manage time effectively in the organization. This segment of the question proved to be challenging to some candidates as they were only able to give one correct response. However, expected responses included “working in an organized and systematic manner” and “analyzing how to be most effective in performing tasks”. Part (b) was worth 3 marks.

In Part (c), candidates were to given an organizational chart to answer three questions in the Application component. Candidates were required to use the chart to respond to the following questions:

- (i) To whom is the senior warehouse clerk responsible? (1 mark)
- (ii) State four facts which the organizational chart illustrates about the sales and marketing department of the company. (4 marks)
- (iii) State two advantages and one disadvantage of the organizational plan. (3 marks).

This section was worth a total of 8 marks.

In Part (c) (i), some candidates read ‘to whom’ incorrectly and gave responses reflecting ‘for whom’. For Part (c) (ii), most candidates were able to state two of the four facts and gave correct responses such as: ‘There is a broad lower level’; ‘there are three levels in the line and staff arrangement of the organization’, and ‘the marketing manager supervises the senior warehouse clerk and senior sales clerk.’ Candidates responded to Part (c) (iii) satisfactorily and scored at least two of the three marks allotted. Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 14 with a mean of 5.82.

Question 2

This question tested Module II, Objective 1 (a–d), and Objective 13 (i) (a–e).

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to state two ways in which teleconferencing and video conferencing facilities are similar and two ways in which they are different. For the similarities, candidates were able to state correct responses such as: ‘Both are methods of conducting

meetings or conferences'; 'they serve different locations simultaneously', and 'they save, time, money, and travel'. This section of the question was worth 4 marks.

For Part (a) (ii) which was worth 3 marks, candidates were asked to state three ways the organization will benefit from using video conferencing. The majority of candidates indicated that they were familiar with this aspect of the syllabus and gave responses such as: 'Time is saved'; 'persons can multi-task', and 'user's own facility may be used'.

In Part (b), candidates were given an extract from an electronic mail from which they were required to draft a response, giving the procedures for handling incoming mail. Most candidates were able to correctly identify the sender and receiver of the e-mail. In addition, they were able to give an appropriate subject and list 3–4 correct procedures for handling incoming mail. However, some candidates failed to include information on remittances as part of the procedures. Part (b) was worth 8 marks.

Many candidates responded satisfactorily on this question with their marks ranging from 0 to 15 with a mean of 5.52.

Question 3

This question tested Module III, Objective 3 (c–d) and Objective 5 (a–m).

In Part (a) (i), worth 4 marks, candidates were expected to list two pieces of equipment and two types of supplies that are used in records management. The majority of candidates provided correct responses for the equipment such as: 'filing cabinets' and 'computers'; and 'file folders', 'index cards' and 'treasury tags' as correct responses for supplies. In some instances, however, candidates could not differentiate between 'equipment' and 'supplies' and even listed items of furniture as equipment.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were to identify three legal stipulations that regulate what information is stored in files. This section was poorly done by the majority of candidates. Candidates gave responses such as 'copyright' and 'breach of confidence'. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c) which was worth 8 marks, candidates were given a scenario and required to write a memorandum to the records manager informing her of the situation and to suggest three ways of solving the problem. This part of the question was satisfactorily done by most candidates. However, some candidates failed to utilize the correct format for writing a memo. Others who attempted the correct format failed to include the positions of the receiver and sender of the memorandum and to include an appropriate subject.

Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15 with a mean of 6.59.

Question 4

This question tested Module V, Objective 1 (a), Objective 3 (a–c) and Objective 5 (a–d).

Part (a), worth 4 marks, required candidates to state four items of business that usually appear on an agenda. This part of the question was done satisfactorily by candidates whose responses included 'apologies', 'minutes' and 'any other business'.

For Part (b), candidates were asked to list three legal requirements of the annual general meeting of an organization. While some candidates were able to provide correct responses, many could not state responses such as: ‘must be held once per year’; ‘payment of dividends’ and ‘21 clear days notice’. This part of the question was worth 3 marks.

In Part (c) (i), candidates were required to copy a ‘To Do List’ table in their answer booklet and complete it. This part of the question proved challenging to candidates and, hence, was done unsatisfactorily. Candidates were required to complete two columns in the table to indicate the ‘Actions’ and ‘Resources’ required as follow-up activities after the sales team had completed its quarterly meetings. Part (c) (i) was worth 6 marks. (Sample responses are given in the table below.)

Activities to be Performed	Action Required to Complete Task	Resources Needed
(a) Ensure that the meeting room is restored	<i>Check/visit the room</i>	<i>Human resources/people/physical resources, e.g. cleaning materials</i>
(b) Filing of minutes in chronological order	<i>Obtain minutes, place in file by date order</i>	<i>Information, file system</i>
(c) Circulation of minutes and action sheets to members of the sales team	<i>Obtain minutes, action sheet</i>	<i>Computer, photocopier, e-mail addresses</i>

In Part (c) (ii), candidates were required to state two possible consequences of the sales team’s failure to take follow-up actions suggested at a previous meeting. Most candidates were able to give one correct response to include: ‘poor performance records’, ‘meeting goals will not be achieved’ or ‘members may be reprimanded or disciplined’. This part of the question was worth 2 marks.

Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 5.23.

Optional Section

Question 5

This question tested Module IX, Objective 1 (a-b)) and Module X, Objective 2 (a).

Part (a) (i), worth 3 marks, asked candidates to state three functions of the purchasing office. Some candidates provided correct responses such as: ‘preparing index of suppliers’, ‘sourcing of suppliers’, ‘placing of contracts’ and ‘management of stock’.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were to identify three main types of purchases that are made by a company. Candidates’ performance indicated that many were not familiar with the different types of purchases that are made by a company. These are: ‘purchases that the business keeps, for example, equipment/assets; purchases to use in the running of the business such as stationery/expenses; purchases to sell, for example, furniture/stock; and purchases to process into a product to sell, such as raw materials’. Part (a) (ii) was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b) (i) which was worth 7 marks, candidates were to use the form provided to complete the invoice to reflect the sales transactions of a large wholesale company. Candidates performed satisfactorily in this section, earning between 2 and 7 marks.

Parts (b) (ii and iii) required candidates to calculate discounts if paid within a specific time period. Most candidates demonstrated competence in this part of the question which was worth 2 marks.

This question was the most popular optional question. Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 7.43.

Question 6

This question tested Module XI, Objective 3 (a-l).

For Part (a), worth 3 marks, candidates were to list three items of information that are placed on a destination sheet. Performance in this section of the question was fair. Most candidates were unable to give appropriate responses such as: 'details of the vehicle to be used; its registration number; description of the goods being delivered; and the name of the driver/assistant'.

For Part (b), candidates were required to state three reasons for providing the driver of the vehicle with a delivery schedule on a daily basis. Candidates performed satisfactorily in this section, giving responses such as: 'giving route details and details of delivery to be made'; 'loading the truck in the sequence of delivery and avoiding the need for double back of routes'. This part of the question was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c), candidates were to draw a flowchart to show the movement of the eight documents that are required for overseas delivery. Most candidates failed to draw the flowchart to indicate the eight documents required for overseas trade. In most instances, candidates could only identify three or four of the documents. Part (c) was worth 7 marks.

This was the least popular optional question. The marks obtained by candidates for this question ranged from 0 to 9 and the mean was 3.54.

Question 7

The question tested Module VII, Objective 2 (a–c), Module VIII, Objective 7 (a–g) and Objective 8 (a–b).

For Part (a) (i), candidates were asked to identify three personnel records that are maintained by the clerk in the human resource office. Candidates performed satisfactorily in this section, indicating responses such as: 'job letters', 'service records', 'appraisal forms' and 'disciplinary records'. This section of the question was worth 3 marks.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were to list three duties that a clerk in the human resource office must perform in preparation for the conduct of interviews. This segment of the question was fairly well done and the majority of candidates were able to include among their responses: 'send letters to invite short listed applicants to an interview'; 'make arrangements for a suitable room'; 'welcome those to be interviewed and show them to the interview room'. This part of the question was worth 3 marks.

In Part (b) (i), worth 3 marks, candidates were given an assumed name with a chequing account at a commercial bank, and having received a bank statement, they were required to explain three transactions conducted on specified dates. This section of the question was unsatisfactorily done.

Part (b) (ii) (a) required candidates to give the possible reason why a cheque that was issued to an individual on a particular date was not listed in the bank statement. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this segment of the question, stating correctly that the cheque was not entered in the bank statement and was issued after the statement was prepared/sent out. Correct responses were worth 1 mark.

Part (b) (ii) (b) required candidates to give a reason why a cheque that was received and deposited in a chequing account was not recorded on the bank statement. Many candidates gave the correct response indicating that the cheque was not presented within the period covered by the statement, and will appear on the following month's statement. This part of the question was worth 1 mark.

For Part (b) (ii) (c), candidates were required to use a form to prepare a Bank Reconciliation Statement. Candidates performed satisfactorily in this section which was worth 4 marks.

Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 6.64.

Question 8

This question tested Module X, Objective 2 (a–c) and Objective 3 (a–g) and Module IX, Objective 3 (e).

For Part (a), candidates were to state three duties performed by a clerk in the sales and marketing office. Candidates performed fairly well in this section, giving correct responses such as: 'sending out price lists and quotations'; 'sending out samples of products', and 'dealing with customer inquiries'. This part of the question was worth 3 marks.

Part (b) required candidates to list three pieces of equipment that will assist personnel in the performance of their duties. This part was done fairly well as some candidates gave correct responses such as calculators, duplicators, computers, bar code readers and cash registers. Part (b) was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c) (i), worth 6 marks, candidates were required to respond to an advertisement, indicating six points to improve the company's catalogues and price lists. This section was done unsatisfactorily as responses such as 'glossy pages'; 'book format'; 'description of items', 'conditions of purchase' and 'availability' were not indicated.

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were required to state three ways in which *Teen Tyme Fashion Statement* can use e-commerce to expand its business opportunities. Generally, this part was unsatisfactorily done. Responses such as: 'place prices on its website'; 'give free samples'; 'set prices' and 'have competitions/prizes', were invariably, not indicated. Part (c) (ii) was worth 3 marks.

Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 12 and the mean was 4.92.

Paper 03/2 - Alternative to SBA

A short case was provided and candidates were required to read and respond to 10 structured questions. This paper was worth 50 marks. The mean for this paper was 14.89.

The Case

The case highlighted the importance and requirements of an annual General Meeting (AGM). The central idea of the case was that an AGM is required by law and must be properly arranged, planned for and executed. Candidates were required to apply analytical and evaluative skills to respond appropriately to the questions asked.

Question 1

Candidates were required to develop a six-point checklist using a form to include a plan of tasks to be done at an AGM on the day before, day of, and day after the meeting. This part of the question was done satisfactorily. For the day before the AGM, candidates gave correct responses such as: 'book meeting venue/room', 'order refreshments and prepare the chairman's agenda'. For the day of the meeting, responses such as: 'ensure the meeting room is ready', 'distribute refreshments', and 'place "meeting in progress" notice on the meeting room door' were given; and on the day after the meeting, candidates gave correct responses such as: 'prepare draft minutes for approval by the chairman and type any correspondence resulting from the meeting'. This question was worth 6 marks. The mean was 3.02.

Question 2

Candidates were asked to arrange seating of four members, given a seating plan. This section posed a challenge to many candidates as they were able to seat only two members correctly, that is, the chairman and the recording secretary adjacent to him. This question was worth 4 marks and had a mean of 1.12.

Question 3

Candidates were required to prepare a combined notice and agenda for the AGM, using the information given in the case, and were to include four of the usual AGM items. Performance in this section revealed that some candidates were not competent in the preparation of a combined notice and agenda. In some instances, the names for 'Notice of Annual General Meeting' and 'Agenda' were omitted, so too were basic AGM items, such as 'chairman's welcome', 'election of officers', 'any other business'. This question was worth 8 marks. The mean mark was 2.03.

Question 4

This question asked candidates to prepare a glossary of three meeting terms. Performance in this section was unsatisfactory as many candidates failed to give correct 'meeting' definitions for: 'Point of order'; 'Ad hoc' and 'Lie on the table', with the latter being misinterpreted and a response given to indicate 'not in a meeting setting'. This question was worth 3 marks. The mean was 0.16.

Question 5

In this question, worth 4 marks, candidates were asked to provide some guidance to assistants on how to take minutes. Some candidates performed fairly well in this section and gave correct responses such as: ‘note time meeting started and ended’, ‘record all decisions made’ and ‘summarize the main points of the arguments as the meeting progresses’. The mean was 1.08.

Question 6

Candidates were asked to prepare the minutes, using information from an excerpt of the Board of Director’s meeting. Weaknesses observed in this question revealed failure by the majority of candidates to include a heading containing the ‘Minutes’, ‘type of meeting’, ‘place’, ‘time’ and ‘date’; identify those present at the meeting using the names given in the excerpt and write the paragraphs in reported speech using good grammar and standard English. This question was worth 8 marks. The mean was 1.60.

Question 7

For this question, candidates were asked to state the reasons a given proxy form was being submitted at the AGM. Many candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this question as they failed to give responses such as: ‘the person has authorized in writing another member to vote on her behalf, for verification and future reference’. This question was worth 4 marks. The mean was 1.55.

Question 8

This question required candidates to write questions that could be included on the questionnaire as a result of shareholders’ dwindling attendance at the AGM over a number of years. Many candidates were able to give two or more correct responses such as: ‘Do you find the meeting informative and interesting?’ ‘Do you feel that your contributions are accepted or ignored?’ ‘What can be done to encourage more shareholders to attend the AGM?’ This question was worth 5 marks. The mean was 2.21.

Question 9

Candidates were required to state the factors they think contribute to the high absenteeism at the AGM. Many candidates attempted this question and gave correct responses such as: ‘insufficient advance notice of meeting’; ‘busy work schedule’; ‘distance of venue for meeting’; and ‘manner in which the AGM is conducted’. This question was worth 4 marks. The mean was 1.81.

Question 10

This question required candidates to give recommendations for improving the attendance at the AGM. Some candidates who attempted this question gave correct responses such as: “begin and finish proceedings on time; send out notices 21 clear days before the meeting; include a feature address to encourage attendance and educate shareholders on importance and value of attending the meeting. This was worth 4 marks. The mean was 1.26.

The overall performance on the paper was unsatisfactory. Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 36 out of a total of 50.

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

1. Success in the Office Administration examination requires not just familiarity with the content, but also the ability to apply the knowledge and skills to the principles, policies and procedures associated with specialized office activities and in unfamiliar circumstances. Candidates should, therefore, relate and align the content studied to the authentic experiences in the office environment while incorporating current technologies, trends and practices.
2. Candidates should acquire a personal copy of the syllabus and other support resource materials and incorporate them diligently in their examination preparation process.
3. Ministries of education and other relevant agencies should collaborate to plan and execute workshops/seminars for private candidates to give them exposure to the types of questions in Paper 03/2 and added practice in answering questions appropriately, paying attention to scope, sequence, grammar, spelling and presentation.
4. Periodic training must be given to teachers, particularly new and inexperienced teachers, in the marking and awarding of marks for internal and external examinations as well as in interpreting mark schemes and keys to allocate marks.