

**CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL**

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE  
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION  
MAY/JUNE 2009**

**COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

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**GENERAL COMMENTS**

Candidates' performance on the 2009 examination was generally satisfactory. Ninety-six percent of the 11 951 candidates achieved Grades I – V. Performance on all papers, with the exception of Paper 02, was comparable to what obtained over the two previous years. Performance on Paper 02 was lower in the 2009 examination. Candidates appear to need more practice in essay writing, as well as in exercises that would help them to better analyse and evaluate information.

**DETAILED COMMENTS**

**PAPER 1A**

**SHORT ANSWERS**

**SECTION A**

**MODULE 1**

This Module was not well done as indicated by a mean mark of 3 (37.5 percent) for Question 1. The mean mark of 4 (57 percent) for Question 2 was realized. Many candidates did not seem to understand the concept 'source' and therefore were hard put to differentiate between (i) 'primary source' and 'secondary source' and (ii) 'source' and 'method'. Many of them also found it difficult to identify challenges in Question 1(c) (ii) and possible contexts in Question 2 (c). Teachers are advised to devote more attention to the notions of 'source', 'primary source', 'secondary source', 'method', 'context', and 'challenge' (in collecting and analysing data).

**SECTION B**

**MODULE 2**

The mean marks for Questions 3-6 were respectively 4.5 (64.3 percent), 4.5 (56.3 percent), 4.5 (64.3 percent), and 5 (56.3 percent), suggesting that this Module was better done than Module 1. Performance overall was just above average.

Teachers are encouraged to see this as a platform for intensifying their work in this area. It is suggested that the following topics be given special focus: characterisation of Creole vocabulary and grammar; definitions and illustrations of 'language', 'dialect', 'dialect variation', and 'register'; and elements of persuasive language.

## SECTION C

### MODULE 3

The mean marks for Questions 7-10 were respectively 5 (71.4 per cent), 5.6 (70 percent), 4 (50 percent), and 4.5 (64.3 percent), suggesting that this was the best-done Module. But while, overall, candidates demonstrated that they were au fait with the general terms of the subject, they need more practice applying their knowledge to specific communication tasks. Too many candidates lost valuable marks because of the general nature of their responses and a tendency to regurgitate teacher notes rather than responding through evaluation, analysis, and synthesis of information and situations.

Teachers are advised to seek to develop their students' higher-order skills of application, evaluation, analysis, and synthesis.

## PAPER 1B

### Aural Comprehension

#### Question 1

Candidates were read an excerpt from a speech and the speaker's 'MAIN purpose' was sought in 'ONE sentence' of no more than 30 words. Most candidates attempted an answer but many tended to read 'main purpose' as 'main idea' and use verbs like 'inform' and 'state' rather than verbs like 'persuade', 'warn', or 'convince'; some of them provided an answer in more than one sentence, contrary to the instructions. One noteworthy consequence of their misinterpretation was that they often did not cite the right examples to support the purpose they gave. In citations, there was often a use of the ellipse (as, for example, in 'Win the war...') which did not clearly indicate the final boundary of the missing text. Further, some candidates who offered their examples as paraphrases violated the conventional style that paraphrases should not be written in quotation marks.

Teachers are advised to develop lesson plans focussed on:

- (i) distinguishing main ideas from purposes
- (ii) how to cite textual material, or give textual information, that supports a main purpose
- (iii) creation of a statement of purpose in a single sentence

#### Question 2

This question required the candidate to state the main device used by the speaker to achieve his purpose and to give three examples of the use of the device stated; 'metaphor' and 'contrast' were the answers expected. Most candidates attempted this question but some gave 'personification' and 'comparison' as answers.

The choice of 'personification' revealed a need for teachers to differentiate in their teaching between 'metaphor' and 'personification', while the choice of comparison revealed a need to differentiate between 'contrast' and 'comparison'.

#### Question 3

This question required candidates to comment on the effectiveness of two of the examples given in support of the speaker's purpose. It was the question that troubled the candidates the most. Many of them were unable to clearly comment on the effectiveness of an example, preferring to give

descriptive statements of its meaning or, worse, merely state that the examples were effective because of what they meant.

Teachers are advised to exercise their students far more than they normally do in how to comment on device effectiveness. In particular, they should focus both on the need to link examples of use to a speaker's (or writer's) purpose and on a suitable form of response.

#### Question 4

This question asked the student to state one other device used by the speaker. Quite a number of them did not attempt it, suggesting perhaps a low level of knowledge about literary devices.

It should go without saying that teachers need to expose their students formally to the wide range of literary devices and to have them explore how they are used by speakers and writers.

## **PAPER 02**

### **ESSAYS**

#### **MODULE 1**

#### Question 1

This question required the candidate to read an extract adapted from *Women's Supplement*, state the writer's main idea, and then write an essay of no more than 500 words stating the writer's purpose, discussing strategies and language techniques used, and evaluating the reliability of the information presented. One of the main requirements of this question was that candidates needed to be specific in their responses. Many candidates tended to ramble off the foci and give irrelevant information, and so they frequently missed the gist of a particular focus.

In respect of the first part of the question, which sought the writer's *main idea*, candidates gave the writer's *purpose* instead, and many of those who gave the main idea failed to mention the connection between illiteracy and the problems faced by women. Superior scripts identified the main problems faced by women as well as the need for education to break the crippling hold of illiteracy.

In respect of the second part of the question, which required candidates to state the writer's purpose, too many of them did not see an intent to persuade behind the information given and settled for a purpose consisting merely of the provision of information.

In discussing the strategies and language techniques, too many candidates did not differentiate clearly enough between the two. Nor did they link them specifically to the writer's purpose.

With respect to their attempts to evaluate the information presented, too many candidates used the terms 'reliability' and 'credibility' interchangeably, and they proved to be unable to extract basic factors of reliability from the passage.

As in the case of Paper 1B, teachers are advised to exercise their students in the differentiation of the concepts of 'main point' and 'purpose'. They also need to give their students much practice in the critical analysis and deconstruction of expository/argumentative discourse. They could use text from – among other sources – reports, documentaries, and discussions in the print and electronic media. Finally, teachers should spend more time teaching their students how to craft answers that value specificity and economy of expression rather than generality and verbosity.

## MODULE 2

### Question 2

This question was divided into four sections, (a) to (d), and the candidates were asked to write an essay of no more than 500 words discussing an extract from Samuel Selvon's *A Brighter Sun*.

Part (a) tested the candidates' ability to discuss Tiger's sense of what 'good' expression is. There were many good answers but also many bad ones. In some of the good ones, candidates mentioned the value Tiger placed on big words and dictionary definitions, providing supporting examples. In some of the bad ones, candidates merely copied chunks of text from the extract without relating them to the actual question asked. Some of these candidates even saw the character Tiger as an animal rather than as the husband of Urmilla.

Part (b) required the candidates to identify similarities and differences between Tiger's speech and Urmilla's. It was the best done of all the parts, with some candidates correctly identifying the relevant features. But there were too many responses that were merely long discourses on 'good English', 'broken English', 'vulgar English', and 'Creole', or that limited themselves to labelling the characters' speech as Standard or Creole (or as one of the latter's components – basilect, mesolect, or acrolect). Where candidates did try to discuss features of the speech of the characters, there was a marked inability to identify grammatical features.

Part (c) asked for the social factors affecting the speech choices made by Tiger. It caused the most problems for candidates, many of whom wrote several pages on sociological factors that had nothing to do with the passage. Some of them traced Tiger's history from slavery and discussed his poverty and his hatred of his economic condition, while others discussed the effects his speech had on his ability to relate to Urmilla and his peers. Most of the candidates who understood the question were able to accurately identify the social factors that influenced Tiger's choice and did a fairly good job of discussing his motivation. The best candidates were able to use this motivation as the controlling idea of their essay.

Part (d) asked the candidates to state how a dramatic production would highlight the communicative tension between Tiger and Urmilla. Quite a few candidates gave excellent answers, but many others performed poorly, offering vague answers and straying into the use of jargon about non-verbal communication and paralanguage without demonstrating an understanding of these terms or of how they applied to the extract, and without even referring to communicative tension. While many candidates were able to correctly identify aspects of the situation to focus on (for example, hand gestures), too many of them did not say how the aspects selected would contribute to the tension.

With respect to organization of their ideas, a great number of candidates answered the question in disconnected sections rather than producing a single coherent essay. Introductions and conclusions were rarely used and only a very few candidates who attempted to use them were able to do so effectively. Most of the introductions and conclusions appeared to be stylistic appendages rather than functional parts of the essays. This weakness, along with the poor use of connectives and other linking devices, resulted in very few responses having thematic coherence. Teachers therefore need to give much more attention to these areas of weakness.

With regard to expression of their thoughts, there were serious problems with subject-verb agreement, spelling, punctuation, and word choice. Many candidates seemed to have a very limited academic vocabulary and so used non words like '*nonbiasly*', '*conversate*', '*interpretate*', and '*miscombobulate*'. Also, it is quite clear that there are too many candidates attempting Paper 02 who have little or no idea of how to compose an essay in academic English. Teachers therefore need to give more attention to these matters in their classrooms.

It would appear that teachers need to provide their students with more guidance on how to answer questions. Many candidates appeared to have some knowledge of the content of the areas of the syllabus covered by this question but were unable to write a good answer. Teachers should therefore teach their students how to write an essay with one controlling idea that is linked to the answers for the various parts of the question. Teachers should also be careful to prepare their students to address the specific questions before them in the actual examination. (Quite a few students seemed to be answering last year's question about attitudes to language or doing a general analysis as required in the analytical piece for Paper IA). Finally, teachers need to spend more time showing their students how to support the points they are making in a discussion, using accurate and relevant examples from the specific extract being analysed.

### MODULE 3

#### Question 3

This question invited the candidates to read a scenario about an awareness-building campaign by young people in response to a flood in their community and then write an essay of no more than 500 words, addressing

- (a) Maintenance of the theme of the campaign,
- (b) Targeting of different kinds of audience
- (c) Use of language in campaign messages
- (d) Evaluation of the campaign.

Candidates' performance on the question was very disappointing. There seemed to be at least three contributing factors. Firstly, perhaps because there was a slight deviation in the format or wording of the question, many candidates simply answered in relation to the customary wording while disregarding the tasks before them. Secondly, many obviously had challenges with the meaning of words like 'maintenance', 'campaign', and 'evaluation'. Thirdly, many simply ignored the question and offered instead a generic response composed from material they had learned in their course generally.

The first task was for the candidates to address the maintenance of the theme of the campaign. They were expected to identify the media and channels that would help to sensitize the neighbourhood about their duty to protect the environment. The media could have included songs, documentaries, advertisements, flyers, dramatic presentations, quizzes, speeches, lectures, text messages and e-mail, while the channels could have included billboards, public address systems, radio, television, the Internet, or even neighbourhood meetings.

It was also expected that candidates would have indicated clearly that the campaign would last over an extended period of time – like three months, six months, or even a year – to facilitate effectiveness. It should have been clear that such a campaign could not be handled in one event such as a town hall meeting.

The second task required the candidates to indicate how they would target different kinds of audiences. Candidates were expected to profile the neighbourhood by various demographics, including age, gender, social class, ethnicity, educational background, and occupation, and say which media / channels would be appropriate for specific categories. While this was handled satisfactorily by some candidates, many candidates' discussions lacked concreteness and depth.

The third task required the candidates to discuss the use of language in the respective campaign messages. They were expected to identify their audiences and relate the use of language to particular audiences. For example, for less educated audiences, they could have opted for simple everyday

structures, lexical items, and idioms in an informal or semi-formal register and, for more educated audiences, perhaps a more formal register, or a combination of semi-formal and formal registers. They could have also discussed the kind of tone and delivery mode they would use for particular groups, along with the appropriate justification.

The final task – evaluation of the campaign – proved to be the most challenging for candidates; many simply ignored it. The candidates were required to evaluate the campaign, using research instruments / methods. Candidates would have learned the latter in Module 1 and so should have been able to demonstrate the skills of application to handle this task. They could have opted for the use of focus groups, interviews, questionnaires, or observation before, during, but particularly after the campaign in order to assess its effectiveness.

It should be pointed out that candidates need to keep in mind that only a maximum of ten marks are usually awarded for ‘content’ while there are seven marks for ‘organization’ and eight marks for ‘expression’. To earn the seven marks for ‘organization’, the essay should have an excellent introduction and an effective conclusion. There should also be organized paragraphs, thematic cohesion between and within these paragraphs, as well as the use of transitional devices such as ‘in addition’, ‘furthermore’, ‘also’, ‘firstly’, ‘secondly’, ‘conversely’, or ‘simultaneously’. To earn the eight marks for ‘expression’, candidates are usually expected to have a strong command of English and some degree of elegance and fluency in their writing.

Candidates and teachers must understand that this paper is not predictable and so there is the need to read questions carefully and to be prepared to integrate concepts from other Modules as the question requires.

If the weaknesses pointed out here are addressed, performance in the 2010 examinations will definitely improve.

### **Internal Assessment**

Most of the internal assessment samples submitted conformed to the criteria as set out by the syllabus. There were pieces that showed creativity and thought and which were stimulating to read. For the most part, the candidates showed that they understood what was required of them. However, there were some themes which needed to be narrower in their focus in order to allow the candidates to be more explicit in their presentations.

### **The Portfolio**

This section of the internal assessment required candidates to produce original pieces in TWO of the three literary genres and to include elements of the chosen genres in their pieces. In many instances, candidates failed to demonstrate this. For example, a persuasive essay should contain enough figurative devices, which would serve to make it credible. Even in instances where short stories were used as a literary genre, some stories lacked lustre and did not contain all of the required elements. This was due in part to the themes selected not lending themselves to this kind of discourse and to the candidates not putting together a well-thought-out rationale that would serve as a guideline to producing a suitably creative work.

It was evident that many candidates were still unable to clearly state an appropriate audience with whom they wished to share their information. As a result, the choice of audience was often too general, which made it difficult for them to identify a forum/context/situation where the information could be shared.

Overall, candidates’ handling of the situation needs to be improved in the rationale. For example, candidates interpreted ‘situation’ to mean a ‘summary of what the creative piece is about’, explaining the process of composition (why the particular genre was chosen and its purpose) or, worse, not addressing it at all. Candidates should be made aware that ‘situation’ in this instance is defined as

‘where the particular creative piece can be found by the intended audience or used by the author or his/her agents’. For example, a poem may be placed in the cultural section of a newspaper or read at a poetry-reading session.

### **The Analytical Essay**

While many candidates demonstrated an understanding of the components to be analysed, others showed a distinct lack of knowledge. Some were able to define and identify these components but could not explain their relevance to the context in which they were used. There were some responses that were literary analyses in that there was no focus on the linguistic elements. However, teachers are to be commended as the incidence of this kind of response was significantly less than in previous years. In a few instances, candidates attempted to analyse pieces that were written solely either in Standard English or Creole. In other cases, candidates selected poems which did not have examples of all the components required for the analysis. Still others selected pieces that were not in keeping with the theme under consideration.

Finally, candidates continued to find it difficult to conform to the stipulated word limit. On the whole, there seemed to be a misunderstanding about this aspect of the internal assessment. Only a few candidates were able to produce appropriate responses to the requirements of the syllabus. Many candidates produced well-written reflective pieces but their analytical pieces were weak or mediocre at best. One reason is that candidates selected themes which did not lend themselves to appropriate treatment in the specified literary genres, and the written pieces did not contain the necessary linguistic elements. This is most clearly evident in the disparity between the teachers’ grades and those of the moderators and suggests that teachers are uncertain about this aspect of the syllabus. It is hoped that teachers will lift their practice as they continue to work with students to have pieces produced that reflect the students’ creativity and show that they have been exposed to all aspects of the syllabus.

## **PAPER 3B**

### **Alternative To Paper IA**

Just over one hundred candidates wrote the paper and the general quality of the responses was weak. Most of the candidates who performed poorly had very little knowledge of the content required by the mark scheme and earned the greater part of their marks for expression and organization. It is clear that these candidates (the majority of whom were private) had not been adequately prepared to provide the content required.

The markers of this paper felt it to be a fair and balanced paper and commented on the need for private candidates to be better prepared in order to come up to acceptable standards of responding.

## **MODULE 1**

### Question 1

This question consisted of two parts, the first requiring the candidates to summarise the information in an article and the second requiring them to write an evaluation of the article that explored the credibility of the information. Most of the candidates showed an inability to deal with the demands of both summarization and evaluation.

## MODULE 2

### Question 2

This question required the candidates to write an essay of no more than 300 words analysing an extract in terms of dialectal variation, attitudes to language, and communicative behaviour. Many candidates responded by offering an attempt at a summary rather than an analysis. One can therefore only assume that they had not been properly instructed.

## MODULE 3

### Question 3

This question tested the candidates' ability to write an essay of no more than 250 words discussing

- (i) the writer's level of emotional involvement
- (ii) the writer's intended audience,
- (iii) what the writer hoped to achieve
- (iv) two suitable contexts the candidate would consider for the piece, other than a magazine.

Again, many candidates had great difficulty answering it, providing short responses overall and therefore suggesting more a lack of preparation than a too-high level of difficulty in the question. In particular, they failed to respond adequately to Parts (i), (iii), and (iv).

### **Conclusion**

One apparent factor that seemed to have accounted for unsatisfactory performance on some of the questions is a change in the format of certain questions. It is clear that quality of student preparation is a factor to be taken more seriously by teachers. Recommendations have been provided in the different sections of this report to help teachers improve their practice, and these should be associated with those given in the current syllabus. In particular, teachers are urged to expand their knowledge of the foci of the three Modules by reading more intensively and widely, and devoting time for reflection on the new knowledge gained from such reading.