

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION®**

MAY/JUNE 2014

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

**Copyright © 2014 Caribbean Examinations Council
St Michael, Barbados
All rights reserved.**

GENERAL COMMENTS

Communication Studies is a three-module syllabus, five-paper subject. The three modules are: Gathering and Processing of Information (Module 1), Language and Community (Module 2), and Speaking and Writing (Module 3). The five papers are: Short Answers (Paper 01A), Aural Comprehension (Paper 01B), Essays (Paper 02), School-Based Assessment (SBA) (Paper 031), and Alternative to SBA (Paper 032).

This year, 14 885 candidates sat the examination. Some 97 per cent of this number achieved Grades I–V, 82 per cent Grades I–IV, 60 per cent Grades I–III, 35 per cent Grades I–II, and 13 per cent Grade 1. This performance differs considerably from that of 2013 in that the percentages in respect of Grades I and II decreased by nine per cent and six per cent respectively.

With respect to module performance at Grades A–E, performance on Module 1 was comparable to that of 2013, but on Module 2, performance at Grades A–C declined noticeably (from 24.51 per cent to 9.41 per cent, 23.54 per cent to 13.11 per cent, and 20.76 per cent to 18.85 per cent, respectively), while performance on Module 3 also declined considerably at Grade A (from 45 per cent to 33 per cent), held steady at Grade B (25 per cent), but improved slightly at Grade C (from 15 per cent to 18 per cent). At those grades, Module 3 was the best performing (76.23 per cent), followed by Module 1 (56.03), and then Module 2 (41.37).

The relatively poor performance on Module 2 is reflected in weaker performance this year on Module 2 of Papers 01A and 02 where the means are noticeably lower than those of 2013.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01A – Short Answers

This paper consisted of ten questions distributed among three modules as follows: two on Module 1 and four each on Modules 2 and 3.

Section A – Module 1

Module 1 consisted of Questions 1 and 2 which were concerned with the research process. It presented candidates with a scenario from which they were required to answer questions relating to: data gathering methods; advantages and disadvantages of such methods; activities to be undertaken in the conduct of the research; research questions they might develop and related interview questions; sources for gathering information on participants' academic performance; and the effect of sources on the validity of the research.

Question 1

Questions 1 and 2 were based on a scenario in which a group of high school students decided to investigate in their school the phenomenon, as reported by several newspapers, of a large number of teenagers spending lots of time playing video games and neglecting their studies as a result.

Question 1 came in three parts — Part (a) asking candidates to identify three methods the researchers could use to gather data, Part (b) requiring them to state one advantage and one disadvantage of using one of the methods identified, and Part (c) asking candidates to choose one of the methods and describe two activities related to it that the researchers would need to undertake in order to conduct the research.

There were 14 907 responses and the mean score was 5.31 (out of 7) — a decrease of 1.28 from 2013.

Parts (b) and (c), which required the skills of reasoning and application, proved to be the most difficult and, given the decline in overall performance on the question over 2013, teachers need to improve their attempts to achieve the relevant objectives. In this regard, they would benefit from using the many suggested teaching and learning activities in the syllabus, as well as from recommendations in the various subject reports over the years.

Question 2

Question 2 came in four parts. Candidates were asked in Part (a), to write one relevant research question; in Part (b), to compose one question that the researchers could ask participants to help in answering the research question written for Part (a); in Part (c), to state two sources that the researchers could use to gather information on participants' academic performance, and in Part (d), to evaluate the effect of the use of one of the sources in (c) on the validity of the research.

There were 14 903 responses and the mean score was 4.26 (out of 8) — a slight decrease from 2013 which witnessed an average performance.

All sub questions here require the skills of reasoning and application, which candidates have over the years demonstrated that they are not well practised in. It appears that teachers need to focus far more on these skills and to acquire the professional training that would help them prepare their students effectively. They also need to spend time teaching them how to approach the answering of questions.

Section B – Module 2

This module consisted of Questions 3–6. Question 3 tested candidates' knowledge of the usefulness of computers and laptops; Question 4 tested their knowledge of how technology has affected vocabulary; Question 5 tested their knowledge of the social uses of English Creole and registers; and Question 6 tested their knowledge of the relationship between language and identity, as well as the social roles of language.

Question 3

This question had two parts. Part (a) asked candidates to explain two advantages which computer users have over non-users, while Part (b) asked them to give two arguments they could use to persuade their parents to let them have a laptop now that they were about to start university, even though they had access to a personal computer at home.

There were 14 911 responses and the mean score was 6.65 (out of 8) — a commendable increase of over 3 marks.

Candidates clearly excelled on this question. It must be noted that, even though the question involved reasoning and application skills, performance was generally very good — perhaps because of the widespread availability and familiarity of desktops and laptops.

Question 4

This question had three parts and was based on a comic strip showing how a revolution in technology had resulted in new ways of using words. Part (a) asked candidates to give an example of a word that was used in a new way, Part (b) required them to list three other words, not found in the comic strip, whose meanings had changed because of the technological revolution, and Part (c) asked candidates to describe two possible attitudes that the character Shanna might have towards the use of ‘virus’ by Kevin, the other character.

There were 14 904 responses and the mean score was 4.16 (out of 8) — a decrease of 1.13 marks.

Performance on the question was average, with Part (c), which required application skills and carried half of the marks, being particularly challenging.

Question 5

This question was based on a scenario in which Ivan, a student who was being trained as a minister of religion to serve congregations in the English-speaking Caribbean, liked to use English Creole in his sermons but was told by his supervising minister that that was inappropriate and that he should refrain from doing so. It came in two parts — Part (a) requiring candidates to give two arguments Ivan might offer for the use of English Creole in his sermons, and Part (b) asking them to (i) name one register that might be used by Ivan in delivering his sermon and (ii) list two features of the register used in (i).

There were 14 887 responses and the mean score was 3.80 (out of 7) — a slight increase of 0.51 over 2013.

Performance on the question was average with Part (a), which required reasoning and application skills and carried more than half of the marks, being particularly challenging.

Table leaders expressed dismay at the frequency of weak expression in Standard English — ignorance of terms like *register*, *continuum*, and *frozen register*; and treatment of English Creole as a language fit only for comedy.

Question 6

This question was based on a comic strip featuring a young lady overhearing a conversation between two young men and telling one of them that he sounded as if he was from the Caribbean although she could not say how she knew. It had three parts. Part (a) asked candidates to suggest one reason why James, one of the young men, did not understand why the lady was able to identify him as Caribbean; Part (b) required them to list three features of James’ speech that allowed the woman to identify him as being Caribbean, and Part (c) asked them to suggest three roles that language plays in society.

There were 14 907 responses and the mean score was 3.79 (out of 8) — a big decline of 2.08 over 2013.

This is a surprising result since Parts (b) and (c), which combine for 6 out of the 8 marks, straightforwardly ask for answers that are specified in the syllabus, and it raises the question of how familiar both teachers and students are with the syllabus. In respect of these parts, candidates erred by giving features in James' friend's speech rather than in James' speech; giving characteristics of language in general rather than the specific features of somebody's speech as required by the question; and not clearly distinguishing between the different roles (such as 'communicate information', 'inform', and 'describe something').

Section C – Module 3

This module consisted of Questions 7–10. The questions tested candidates' knowledge of the communication process and mediums for the conveyance of messages; their ability to evaluate the use of such mediums; their knowledge of the applicability of visual aids to teaching and learning; and their knowledge of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication and associated technologies.

Question 7

This question was based on a scenario in which the Newsletter Committee of a secondary school was trying to sell its first newsletter and so decided to market the newsletter within the school. The question had two parts. Part (a) asked candidates to list three aspects of the communication process that the committee should consider before it marketed the newsletter, and Part (b) required them to select two of the aspects listed in (a) and explain the significance of each.

There were 14 795 responses and the mean score was 4.13 (out of 7) — a slight decline of 0.66 from 2013.

Performance on the question was just about average. While many candidates were able to provide different aspects of the communication process, they stumbled over the requirement to explain their significance. Again, the skills of reasoning and application proved to be in short supply.

Question 8

This question had two parts — Part (a) asking candidates to identify three mediums which the committee could use to effectively convey its message, and Part (b) requiring them to select two of the mediums provided in (a) and explain why each could be used to market the newsletter effectively.

There were 14 754 responses and the mean score was 4.23 (out of 7) — a slight decline of 0.12 marks.

Again, identifying the mediums proved far more difficult than explaining why they could be used to market the newsletter effectively.

Question 9

This question was based on a scenario in which Mr Jackson, a teacher at a high school, was advised by his principal to use visual aids in his teaching instead of lecturing all the time. The question had two parts — Part (a) asking candidates to identify four visual aids Mr Jackson could use to enhance his teaching, and Part (b) asking them to choose two of the visual aids identified in (a) and state one way in which each could facilitate the learning process.

There were 14 864 responses and the mean score was 5.75 (out of 8) — a slight decrease of 0.09.

Performance on this question was above average, with Part (b), which required an explanation, proving more troublesome than Part (a).

Question 10

This question was based on a scenario in which a politician was urging his audience to vote for his party on Election Day as their decision would affect them for the rest of their lives and as they were good people whom he trusted to do the right thing. The question had four parts — Part (a) asking candidates to give the form of communication suggested by the scenario; Part (b) requiring them to suggest a reason to justify their answer in (a); Part (c) asking them to identify two non-verbal forms of communication that could be used to enhance the message in the scenario; and Part (d) asking them to suggest one technology that could be used to deliver the message to the electorate and explain how it could be used to good effect.

There were 14 805 responses and the mean score was 3.86 (out of 8) — a big decrease of 2.17 marks.

The question was poorly done. The parts on which candidates stumbled most were (b) and (d) which, predictably, required a reason and an explanation, respectively.

Paper 01B – Aural Comprehension

This paper is based only on Module 1 objectives and consists of four questions based on a passage for listening comprehension.

Question 1

This question asked candidates to state the main idea of the extract in a sentence of no more than 20 words.

There were 14 920 responses and the mean score was 1.05 (out of 3) — practically the same as 2013.

Only a few candidates were able to score full marks on the question and, as usual, candidates are advised to explore the differences between a purpose statement and a statement of main idea.

Question 2

The question required candidates to identify four details about “the East that were viewed from the ‘small boat’”.

There were 14 920 responses and the mean score was 3.46 (out of 4) — an increase of 0.71.

This is traditionally the best-performing question on this paper, and it did not disappoint this year. Teachers should emphasize the need to quote specific details from the passage.

Question 3

This question required candidates to identify two literary devices used in the extract and give one example of each.

There were 14 921 responses and the mean score was 3.22 (out of 4) — a slight decrease of 0.18 from 2013.

The question was clearly well done but, given that candidates continue to treat metaphor and personification as the same device, provide things that are not literary devices (for example, adjectives) and give the general answer ‘imagery’ instead of the different types of imagery (for example: tactile, visual, auditory), teachers are again advised to compile a list of devices along with illustrations and train students in their literary use.

Question 4

The question had two parts — Part (a) asking candidates to comment on the effectiveness of each of the literary devices identified in Question 3 by stating how the extract was enhanced, and Part (b) requiring them to comment on the effectiveness of each of the devices identified in Question 3 by stating what responses their use evoked.

There were 14 914 responses and the mean score was 1.00 (out of 4) — exactly the same as 2013.

This question continues to be the worst performing as candidates gave definitions and general explanations of devices rather than showing how use of a device enhanced the extract or evoked particular responses.

As in the past, the following additional recommendations are offered in the interest of better performance from both teachers and students:

- There should be more intensive practice in listening comprehension exercises in preparation for the examination. Teachers should discuss with students the requirements of the various questions during these preparatory sessions.
- Schools should consider using a sound amplification system as well as an articulate reader, preferably from among teachers of Communication Studies and English.

Paper 02 – Essays

Paper 02 consisted of three essay-type questions — one per module.

Section A – Module 1

Question 1

The question was based on the extract James Keller's *Exile and Return* in A Reader for Developing Readers. It had two parts — Part (a) which required candidates to state the writer's main idea in approximately 30 words, and Part (b) which asked them to write an essay in approximately 500 words discussing the writer's purpose, the effectiveness of at least two different organizational strategies and at least two different language techniques, as well as the appropriateness of the tone.

There were 14 889 responses and the mean score was 10.60 (out of 25) — a slight increase of 0.72.

Based on candidates' performance, teachers are encouraged to help students to

- differentiate between the main idea and the purpose
- state a device, give an example and then provide an explanation, making reference to the example
- structure the essay by providing an introduction, a body of well-developed cohesive paragraphs, semantic or structural connections between paragraphs, and a conclusion
- differentiate clearly between organizational strategies and language techniques
- stress the strategies and techniques normally associated with descriptive, narrative, argumentative, and expository discourse
- explore the varied textbooks on the market for fuller understanding of syllabus content.

Section B – Module 2

Question 2

This question was based on Deborah Jean-Baptiste-Samuel's poem *Vessels* and asked candidates to write an essay of no more than 500 words discussing (a) what the poet achieves by using a mixture of Standard English and Creole, (b) the implications for the wider acceptability of Creole arising from the poet's use of this language variety, and (c) how a video presentation would enhance the message.

There were 14, 864 responses and the mean score was 8.99 (out of 25) — a noticeable decline of 3.42.

Although responses indicated that most candidates understood the poem, a large number of them did not demonstrate a full understanding of this question. The candidates were expected to provide responses such as:

The poet's mixture of Standard English and Creole in the poem reflects societal use of mixed structures.

Her usage suggests that both languages are equally suitable for the expression of her message.

Although many candidates successfully identified what the poet achieved in terms of audience, they were less successful in identifying the other achievements and in appropriately developing the discussion. Generally, they separately treated each language variety instead of focusing on the ‘mixture’ of both; demonstrated too many misconceptions about Creole and the speakers of the language, resorting to derogatory stereotypes; and presented some evidently memorized linguistic terms (basilect, mesolect, acrolect, etc.) without due consideration of the test item requirement.

Part (b) required candidates to apply critical thinking skills to discuss, for example, how the use of Creole could be a case for its greater use in published poetic works, its inclusion in a national language policy, and so on. However, this part of the question defeated most of the candidates, many of whom merely recounted the contents and/or undertook a literary analysis of the poem.

Part (c) required candidates to identify the characters’ behaviours and apply critical thinking skills to discuss an enhancement of such behaviours by focusing on facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and actual statements of the characters. Furthermore, it required them to highlight the use of symbols of the message, for example, the different vessels. Importantly, when referring to the characters, candidates should have made references to specific behaviours to be observed, for example, the contrasting tones of voices suggesting that the woman is strong and commanding while the man is timid and weak. However, this part of the question was not successfully handled by many of the candidates either, many of whom merely constructed stock responses about a video production, without any attempt at specific references to the poem or at any meaningful analysis. Also, some candidates discussed the use of audiovisual aids and paralinguistic behaviours in general terms while others wrote their own script for production.

With respect to organization, many candidates exhibited challenges in producing an essay with an introduction, well-developed body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Consequently, at the macro level, many of the responses were structurally deficient; for example, some candidates divided their responses to match the division of the questions. In some cases where introductions and/or conclusions were attempted, they were ineffectively developed, with some candidates producing one extended paragraph. Many candidates used appropriate transitional devices to achieve coherence between paragraphs, but there were still many candidates who sparsely and inconsistently used these devices.

With regard to expression, many candidates showed that it was a struggle to (i) agree subjects with verbs, (ii) select the right tenses, (iii) use tenses consistently, (iv) control complex syntax, (v) choose the right word, (vi) spell words correctly, (vii) punctuate correctly, and (viii) use the appropriate register.

It was clear that composing an essay continues to be a difficult task for numerous candidates.

Teachers need to hone both their essay-writing knowledge and their essay-teaching skills. Emphasis should be placed on the structure of expository essays and on fundamental topics, such as (i) effectively introducing expository essays, (ii) expressing controlling ideas, (iii) stating the theme and constituent topics, (iv) illustrating a point, (v) making a paragraph cohesive, (vi) making transitions from paragraph to paragraph, and (vii) effectively concluding expository essays.

Generally, candidates were awarded average scores. Several candidates did not attempt the question, and some attempts were merely a paraphrase and/or summary of the contents of the poem, or a vague or circuitous discussion, or short, inadequate responses.

In addition to essay-writing skills, candidates should be guided in the application of the theoretical content of the module to authentic language/communication situations.

Section C – Module 3

Question 3

This question was based on a scenario about a bank deciding to match the opening deposit in the accounts of 10 lucky new savers between the ages of 13 and 18, and the youngest member of a marketing and communications company having been given the task to promote the service and formulate a winning plan. The question required candidates to write an essay in no more than 300 words, producing the plan they would present to the bank’s board of directors and identifying two aids they could use to enhance their presentation to the board.

There were 14 791 responses and the mean score was 13.46 (out of 25) — a slight increase of 0.83.

This was the best done of the three questions. Candidates displayed the expression and organization problems adverted to in respect of the first two questions but generally scored most of their marks on content.

The recommendations above re expression and organization apply here as well.

Paper 031 – School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This paper involves the moderation or remarking of a maximum of five sample scripts from each of the schools doing Communication Studies.

This year’s marking exercise was challenging in some respects. While there were students who responded well, there were others whose portfolios did not reach the required standard. One had hoped that by now the new syllabus would be so familiar that far more students would be able to respond appropriately to the requirements. Moreover, some centres seemed to be still using the old syllabus so they were presenting more than one reflective piece and a rationale for each. Teachers need to become familiar with the syllabus so as to reduce the incidence of students being placed at a disadvantage in the moderation process.

The Portfolio

Students are required to present, in addition to the preface and the reflective piece, an introduction containing specific features: theme and purpose; treatment of the same; and how the theme is related to the students’ academic, personal and work interests. This section must be labelled ‘General Introduction’ as opposed to ‘Introduction’ which was the old format. Many students did not respond accordingly, hence valuable marks were lost. However, some students demonstrated good control of the theme selected, as well as a creative representation in their selected genre, while others presented research-like topics and portfolios which are very similar to those for Caribbean Studies. For example,

some students created questionnaires and charts and analysed data for the exposition. Literary genres selected should feature the elements of those genres, and they should be credible and contain, at the very least, the linguistic features to be analysed.

Many students are still not clear about the requirements of the general introduction. This must show: how the theme is narrowed in the topic, some background information, and why the particular theme was chosen. In addition, students are required to adequately discuss the treatment of the theme in the exposition and the reflection. There is also a clear distinction to be made between the three interests, and each must be sufficiently explained in order for marks to be awarded. Additionally, each aspect of the general introduction must be distinctly outlined. In the preface, marks are awarded holistically for the purpose, audience, and context.

Overall, some themes did not lend themselves to creativity, so students should be guided in their selection. Other themes should have been delineated so that a specific aspect could be dealt with. An appropriate genre must be chosen; that is, one that can lend itself to creativity and include all the elements that are to be analysed in the subsequent section. Furthermore, the creativity sought is to be demonstrated in students' ability to adequately express their views on the theme using the language rather than art work. Marks are not awarded for artistic presentations, but where art work occurs it should be suitably enhancing rather than detracting from the theme under consideration.

Expression in Standard English needs improvement, and it should be recognized at this stage that English Creole also has peculiar vocabulary and can be spelt.

Students should also pay particular attention to the organization of their pieces, which must include an introduction and a conclusion, especially in the analytical section. Additionally, where research is cited, sources must be properly included in the list of references. There should also be a suitable conclusion to the project.

The Analysis

This section of the portfolio continues to be done inefficiently. Many students were able to respond appropriately to the requirements of the syllabus, while others were still unable to analyse the linguistic features of the reflective piece. Some analyses presented were definitions of the features rather than examples of them, why they were used, and how they conveyed the theme. In some instances, the concepts were named but not meaningfully discussed. This was in part due to the fact that the original piece did not contain sufficient features to be discussed. Very often, students were unable to give relevant examples of dialectal variation or identify the English Creole features. A few students presented analyses that were more literary than linguistic, as well as discussion of all four linguistic features instead of two.

Further Comments

- Teachers should adhere to the marking guidelines in the syllabus as these are what are used in the moderation process.
- In the case where the computer selects a sample that does not contain all the areas to be moderated, the next lowest sample should be sent. The areas of the sample that are moderated are

the introduction, the preface, the reflection, and the analysis. Therefore, when the sample does not contain these, moderation is rendered meaningless.

- The relevant students should be advised that there is no advantage to them to use obscene language in their work or provide graphic accounts of sexual activity.
- Teachers should ensure that students understand the difference between the theme and the topic of the portfolio. For example, if students are considering the theme ‘Tourism’, they should select a specific aspect/topic like ‘The Economic Benefits’ or ‘The Environmental Impact’; the topic is a component of the theme, and only one is needed for the portfolio.
- Half marks should not be awarded.
- Teachers should ensure that the figure in the total column is correct.
- Students are expected to conform to the writing conventions in Standard English for the analytical essay, which should have an introduction, development, and a conclusion.
- The examination requires all students to present their original work. Students who plagiarize or collude with other students will be severely penalized. Teachers should encourage their students to present their own work.

Paper 032 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This paper is done by candidates who do not present an SBA; it consists of three essay questions — one per module. Performance on this paper continued to be weak but there was a slight improvement this year over 2013.

Section A – Module One

Question 1

This question required candidates to summarize the argument of a passage in 30 words and write a 150-word evaluation of the passage, exploring whether the information was valid.

There were 189 responses and the mean score was 8.24 (out of 20) — practically the same as 2013.

Although some candidates were able to identify the main idea of the passage, they were unable to write the information in their own words. This suggested a weakness in their summary writing technique. Many were able to identify the sources supporting the views of the writer but they were not able to state why the information was valid.

Section B – Module Two

Question 2

The question required candidates to write an analysis in a 300-word essay on an extract from *Backfire* (adapted from Oliver Flax’s *Tantie Gertrude*), taking into consideration two of the following issues: dialectal variation, attitudes to language, and communicative behaviours.

There were 186 responses and the mean score was 8.41 (out of 20) — a big increase of 2.45.

While there was clearly some improvement over 2013, the responses showed a general lack of understanding of the issues and, even where there was some understanding, the responses were, in the main, inadequate. As was clear in previous years, the concept of conventional essay writing seemed to be alien to most candidates. However, overall, there was a slight improvement in expression.

Section C – Module Three

Question 3

This question required candidates to write a 250-word essay on a passage adapted from ‘A Different Kind of Walking’ in *Awake*, Vol. 86, No. 82, November 22, 2005, p. 19, discussing the following: the issues that the writer wants the reader to focus on, the intended audience, what the writer hopes to achieve, and two suitable contexts for the piece other than a general-interest magazine.

There were 185 responses and the mean score was 11.85 (out of 20) — a noticeable increase of 2.25.

On the whole, candidates’ responses suggested a peripheral knowledge of the concepts being examined but there was a slight improvement in expression.

Conclusion

Far better preparation is necessary on every level, and the greatest need seems to be for teachers of private candidates to become knowledgeable about the content of the syllabus and to acquire professional pedagogical training.

Recommendations have been provided in the different sections of this report to help teachers improve their practice, and these should be associated with the teaching and learning activities suggested in the new syllabus. In particular, teachers are urged to expand their knowledge of the three modules by reading more intensively and extensively, devoting time for reflection on the new knowledge gained from such reading, and trying out new research-based methods of delivering their content.