



CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

CSEC[®] Office Administration

**SYLLABUS
SPECIMEN PAPER
MARK SCHEME
SUBJECT REPORTS**

Macmillan Education
4 Crinan Street, London, N1 9XW
A division of Macmillan Publishers Limited
Companies and representatives throughout the world

www.macmillan-caribbean.com

ISBN 978-0-230-48219-7
© Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC®) 2017
www.cxc.org
www.cxc-store.com

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First published 2014
This revised edition published November 2017

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Office Administration Syllabus Extract

Office Administration is a Business Education subject concerned with the study of administrative principles, policies, procedures and technological competencies governing the modern office environment. The content and teaching strategies used reflect current trends in the modern office. The syllabus aims to provide students with knowledge, skills and attitudes for immediate access to entry-level positions such as administrative assistants, clerical assistants, receptionists, record management clerks, accounting clerks and factory and dispatch clerks and other related positions.

The syllabus adopts a practical approach, aimed at equipping students with the technical and professional skills to perform effectively, and for mobility as administrative support personnel within an organisation. Further, it seeks to nurture and improve students' social and personal management skills and foster the development of a positive work ethic. In addition, the syllabus provides the foundation for students desirous of furthering their education in other related fields. The syllabus is arranged in 12 sections, sub-divided into specific objectives and corresponding content.

- Section 1 Office Orientation
- Section 2 Communication
- Section 3 Recruitment and Orientation
- Section 4 Records and Information Management
- Section 5 Reception and Hospitality
- Section 6 Meetings
- Section 7 Travel Arrangements
- Section 8 Human Resources Management
- Section 9 Accounts and Financial Services
- Section 10 Procurement and Inventory Management
- Section 11 Sales, Marketing and Customer Service
- Section 12 Operations, Despatch and Transport services



CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate®
CSEC®**

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION SYLLABUS

Effective for examinations from May – June 2017

Published by the Caribbean Examinations Council.

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Correspondence related to the syllabus should be addressed to:

The Pro-Registrar
Caribbean Examinations Council
Caenwood Centre
37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5, Jamaica

Telephone Number: + 1 (876) 630-5200
Facsimile Number: + 1 (876) 967-4972
E-mail Address: cxcwzo@cx.org
Website: www.cxc.org

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The Garrison, St Michael BB14038, Barbados



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The Office Administration Syllabus (CXC 27/0/SYLL 15) was amended in 2015 for first examination in 2017.

Teaching is expected to commence on the amended syllabus in September 2015.

The amendments to the syllabus are indicated by italics.

First issued 2004
Revised 2011
Amended 2013
Amended 2015
Amended 2017

Please check the website, www.cxc.org for updates on CXC's syllabuses.

Office Administration Syllabus

◆ RATIONALE

Office Administration is a Business Education subject concerned with the study of administrative principles, policies, procedures and technological competencies governing the modern office environment. The content and teaching strategies used should therefore reflect current trends in the office.

This Office Administration syllabus is designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to function effectively within a modern office environment. The syllabus adopts a practical approach, aimed at equipping students with the technical and professional skills to perform effectively, as clerical and administrative support personnel within an organisation. It also provides the foundation for students desirous of furthering their education in a range of disciplines including Events Management, Human Resources Management, Office Administration, Chartered Accounting, Procurement and Projects Management, *and Logistics and Supply Chains Operations*.

The syllabus seeks to instil tenets of the Ideal Caribbean Person as articulated by the CARICOM Caribbean Education Task Force (CTF) and adopted by the CARICOM Heads of Government at their 18th Summit. To this end the syllabus contains objectives and content intended to nurture and improve students' social responsibility, personal management skills and positive work ethic. *In addition, in keeping with the UNESCO Pillars of Learning, on completion of this course of study students will learn to know, to be, to do, and to live together.*

◆ AIMS

The syllabus aims to:

1. *provide students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies to function in the modern office environment;*
2. develop awareness of the principles, policies, procedures and technological competencies involved in office administration;
3. develop technical, human, planning, organising, problem-solving and management skills necessary for functioning in a modern office environment;
4. provide students with the capability to adapt to changes that impact the business environment;
5. help students appreciate the wide range of attitudes, attributes and behaviours necessary for success and advancement in the world of work; and,
6. lay the foundation for career development and further studies in the business field.

◆ GENERAL OBJECTIVES

On completion of the syllabus, students should:

1. acquire the knowledge and skills of office administration to function effectively in a modern office environment;
2. develop problem-solving capabilities to function with minimum supervision;
3. develop the confidence and capability to respond effectively to new processes in the office;
4. acquire technological, communicative, problem-solving and attitudinal skills to function effectively in the working environment;
5. acquire interpersonal skills to help foster organisational harmony and customer goodwill;
6. develop the confidence to seek promotional opportunities within the organisation;
7. develop the competency to choose from a wide range of career paths in the business field;
8. acquire knowledge and skills that would allow them to pursue further education in related fields of business;
9. acquire skills to conduct self-directed investigations into alternative procedures and systems that may assist in maximising the output of the office;
10. develop proper work ethics, social responsibility, and integrity that contribute in promoting a positive image of the organisation in which they are employed;
11. develop the self-esteem and confidence to make an easy transition from school to the world of work.

◆ SKILLS AND ABILITIES TO BE ASSESSED

1. *Technical;*
2. *Communication;*
3. *Planning and organising;*
4. *Problem-solving; and,*
5. *Management.*

◆ ORGANISATION OF THE SYLLABUS

The syllabus is arranged in twelve *SECTIONS*, sub-divided into specific objectives and corresponding content.

SECTION I	-	OFFICE ORIENTATION
SECTION II	-	COMMUNICATION
SECTION III	-	<i>RECRUITMENT AND ORIENTATION</i>
SECTION IV	-	RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
SECTION V	-	RECEPTION AND HOSPITALITY
SECTION VI	-	MEETINGS
SECTION VII	-	TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS
SECTION VIII	-	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
SECTION IX	-	<i>ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES</i>
SECTION X	-	<i>PROCUREMENT AND INVENTORY MANAGEMENT</i>
SECTION XI	-	<i>SALES, MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE</i>
SECTION XII	-	<i>OPERATIONS, DESPATCH AND TRANSPORT SERVICES</i>

◆ SUGGESTED TIMETABLE ALLOCATION

It is recommended that a minimum of five 40-minute periods per week or the equivalent be allocated to teaching the syllabus. This time should include at least one double period.

◆ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHING

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of this syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities listed below. *These activities are designed to support a learner-centred approach, encourage collaboration, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.*

1. Expose students to offices of varying types and sizes to facilitate comparison between offices.
2. Expose students to different types of office equipment. They should, for example, be able to identify explain the use of equipment found in the modern office.
3. During the delivery of instruction, teachers should highlight those topics that are repeated throughout the syllabus in order to indicate the relevance of the topic to the particular section, for example:

- (a) attributes;
 - (b) filling out forms; and,
 - (c) office equipment.
- 4. Use a variety of methodologies, such as role plays, case studies, simulations, field trips, games and presentations by resource personnel. Practical assignments should be used where possible.
- 5. Develop lessons using themes that encompass topics from different sections of the syllabus. For example, the following themes could be taught as one extended lesson:
 - (a) plan the agenda for a meeting (SECTION II);
 - (b) conduct the meeting (SECTION VI);
 - (c) prepare the minutes of the meeting (SECTION VI);
 - (d) Travel Itinerary (SECTION VII); and,
 - (e) Monetary instruments (SECTION IX).

Where physical examples are not feasible, teachers are advised to utilise the resources of the Internet and other electronic technologies.

◆ CERTIFICATION

The Office Administration syllabus will be examined at the General Proficiency at both the January and May/June sittings. Candidates will be awarded an overall grade reported on a six-point scale. In addition to the overall grade, candidates' performance will be reported by a letter grade under profile dimensions of Knowledge and Comprehension, and Application. These profile dimensions are explained below.

◆ DEFINITION OF PROFILE DIMENSIONS

1. Knowledge and Comprehension

The ability to:

- (a) state, list and identify facts, information, principles and procedures;
- (b) explain and interpret procedures, actions and situations related to office administration; and,
- (c) use knowledge in familiar contexts.

2. Application

The ability to:

- (a) use knowledge in unfamiliar circumstances;

- (b) design and complete business documents;
- (c) formulate plans for given activities;
- (d) develop strategies to solve problems;
- (e) compose various types of communicative materials and make inferences.

◆ FORMAT OF THE EXAMINATIONS

This examination is offered at the General Proficiency. The examination consists of Paper 01, Paper 02 and Paper 03/1 (School-Based Assessment). Paper 03/2 (alternative to the School-Based Assessment) is offered to Private candidates as an alternative to the School-Based Assessment.

Paper 01

(1 hour 15 minutes)
(60 marks)

A multiple-choice test consisting of 60 items.

The items will test knowledge and application of important facts, concepts, principles, processes and procedures involved in office work and the application of these. *Items* in the paper can come from all Sections of the syllabus. The Knowledge and Comprehension profile and the Application profile will be tested in a ratio of 2:1.

Paper 02

(2 hours)
(90 marks)

An essay paper divided into two sections:

Section I: Three compulsory questions drawn from Sections I – VII of the syllabus.

Section II: Three compulsory questions drawn from Sections VIII – XII of the syllabus and will focus on specialised departments in the modern organisation.

Each question on this paper will be worth 15 marks to be distributed as follows:

(i) Section I:

Question 1 -	Knowledge and Comprehension	8 marks
	Application	7 marks
Questions 2 and 3 -	Knowledge and Comprehension	7 marks
	Application	8 marks

(ii) Section II:

Knowledge and Comprehension	6 marks
Application	9 marks

Paper 03/1

(SBA)
(50 marks)

A set of assignments set and marked by the teacher using guidelines and criteria provided in the syllabus. This Paper will be worth 25 per cent of the final grade. *Students are encouraged to work in groups and submit one report.*

Paper 03/2

(50 marks)
(1 hour 30 minutes)

Paper 032 is a written examination designed for candidates whose research projects cannot be monitored by tutors in a recognised educational institution and who have been assigned by the Local Registrar to write Paper 032 at a designated examination centre.

◆ WEIGHTING OF THE EXAMINATION COMPONENTS

The weighting of the examination components is shown below.

Papers Profiles	Paper 01 Multiple – choice	Paper 02 Essay	Paper 03 SBA	Total	Per cent
Knowledge and Comprehension	40	40	-	80	40
Application	20	50	50	120	60
TOTAL	60	90	50	200	100
PER CENT	30	45	25	-	100

◆ REGULATIONS FOR PRIVATE CANDIDATES

Private candidates must be entered for the examination through the local registrar in their respective territories and will be required to sit Paper 01, Paper 02 and Paper 032 (the alternative to the School-Based Assessment).

Paper 032 is a written examination designed for candidates whose research projects cannot be monitored by tutors in a recognised educational institution and who have been assigned by the Local Registrar to write Paper 032 at a designated examination centre. It will consist of a case study and related questions.

◆ REGULATIONS FOR RESIT CANDIDATES

For CSEC® candidates, SBA scores can be carried forward only ONCE and only during the year immediately following the first sitting. In order to assist candidates in making decisions about whether or not to reuse a moderated SBA score, the Council will continue to indicate on the preliminary results if a candidate's moderated SBA score is less than 50% in a particular subject. Candidates re-using SBA scores should register as "Re-sit candidates" and must provide the previous candidate number when registering.

Resit candidates may enter through schools, recognised educational institutions or the Local Registrar's Office.

Private candidates will be required to resit all components of the examination.

◆ SECTION I: OFFICE ORIENTATION

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. describe the role and functions of the office in business activities;	Role and functions of the Office in keeping with its mission (<i>commitment</i>), vision (<i>the means/the how</i>) and goals(<i>measurable objectives</i>): (a) <i>productivity</i>; (b) distribution and exchange of goods and services; (c) collection, processing and preservation of data (manual); (d) collection, processing and storage of data (electronic); (e) dissemination of information; and, (f) organisational management and legal control.
2. describe how office structure and activity may be organised according to the size and nature of a business;	Size and nature of a business will <i>impact</i>: (a) the multiplicity of positions on staff; (b) types and patterns of relationships (use of organisational charts); (c) nature of duties and responsibilities; (d) deployment of employees; (e) decisions regarding decentralisation or centralisation (for example, reprographics, word processing and records management); and, (f) extent of computer hardware/software usage.
3. compare different types of office layouts;	Types of office layout: (a) traditional (enclosed or cellular); (b) open plan (modular); and, (c) virtual office.

SECTION I: OFFICE ORIENTATION (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
4. examine the ergonomics of the office as it relates to comfort, health and safety issues;	Ergonomics as it relates to comfort, health and safety (a) layout and size; (b) furniture and equipment; (c) seating, lighting, ventilation, temperature; and, (d) related injuries.
5. describe the contribution of various types of equipment to office efficiency;	Types and purpose of equipment used in general and specialised office work, including: (a) guillotine and shredder; (b) photocopier, risograph, scanner, printer-laser, inkjet, impact, plotter; (c) computer; (d) multimedia devices (digital camera, projector); (e) facsimile machine; (f) laminator, binding machine; and, (g) labelers.
6. propose desirable skills, attitudes and attributes of office personnel; and,	(a) Skills: (i) literacy and numeracy; (ii) computer literacy and proficiency in the use of productivity tools; (iii) effective communication; (iv) time management; and, (v) analytical, problem-solving.

SECTION I: OFFICE ORIENTATION (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
	(b) Attitudes:
	(i) team-spirit, group dynamics, cooperation;
	(ii) tolerance, appreciation of diversity;
	(iii) safety consciousness;
	(iv) environmental awareness; and,
	(v) social responsibility.
	(c) Attributes:
	(i) regularity, punctuality;
	(ii) positive work ethic;
	(iii) ethics, integrity, honesty, confidentiality;
	(iv) willingness;
	(v) <i>deportment</i> ; and,
	(vi) self-esteem, confidence.
7. assess the value of good human relationships to office efficiency.	The importance of good relationships with:
	(a) supervisors;
	(b) colleagues; and,
	(c) internal and external customers.

Suggested teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

SECTION I: OFFICE ORIENTATION (cont'd)

1. *Have students engage in research on the dos and don'ts of the office. This research should span the course and include aspects such as dress code, office layout, attitude, attributes, work environment, and labour laws. The students should start a scrap book in which they display relevant entries such as artefacts, magazine clippings and articles. Inform/ Remind students that portions of this will be eventually incorporated into the SBA.*
2. *Develop or identify and study cases which highlight interpersonal relationships. Ensure that aspects such as attitudes, conduct in office, handling issues in the office.*

◆ SECTION II: COMMUNICATION

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	Channels of communication:
1. describe the various channels of communication used in the office;	(a) Directional (i) <i>formal/official; and,</i> (ii) <i>informal/ unofficial.</i> (b) Oral (i) <i>interviews;</i> (ii) <i>meetings and conferences;</i> (iii) <i>radio and television; and,</i> (iv) <i>telephone; intercom.</i> (c) Electronic (i) tele-conferencing, video-conferencing; (ii) computer, Internet, intranet, world wide web, electronic mail, social media; (iii) telephone; facsimile; (iv) scanning, scan to email, scan to file; and, (v) telecommuting, telemarketing. (d) Written (i) letters; (ii) memoranda; (iii) agendas, notices of meetings; (iv) reports, minutes; (v) questionnaires;

SECTION II: COMMUNICATION (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
	(vi) itineraries;
	(vii) notices, press releases; and,
	(viii) advertisements.
	(e) Visual
	(i) pictures, charts, graphs;
	(ii) signals, signs;
	(iii) multi-media presentations; and,
	(iv) body language.
2. identify factors affecting the selection of communication channel;	Factors to be considered in selecting communication channel:
	(a) degree of urgency;
	(b) genre (oral, written, electronic, visual);
	(c) level of confidentiality, privacy;
	(d) location and distance, time zones;
	(e) <i>cost, efficiency, effectiveness; and,</i>
	(f) <i>audience size.</i>
3. identify factors affecting the flow of communication;	Communication flows:
	(a) upward, downward, vertical, horizontal, grapevine;
	(b) Communication Climate
	(i) closed; and,
	(ii) open.

SECTION II: COMMUNICATION (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
4. discuss the barriers to effective communication;	Barriers to communication, including: (a) perceptual, cultural and personal bias; (b) semantics; (c) language; (d) literacy skills; and, (e) internal and external barriers .
5. Identify the various forms of business structure;	Forms of decision-making business structures: (a) Centralised: Entrepreneurial/centralised. (b) Decentralised (i) pyramid; (ii) matrix; and, (iii) independent.
6. select appropriate types and sizes of stationery for a variety of uses;	(a) Types of stationery, for example: (i) bond; (ii) parchment; and, (iii) NCR paper (no carbon required). (b) Sizes of paper, envelopes and label dimensions including: Letter, legal, A4, A5, A6, DL, C4, C5
7. select relevant sources of information;	Reference material including: (a) dictionary, thesaurus; (b) official gazettes;

SECTION II: COMMUNICATION (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
	(c) telephone directory;
	(d) maps;
	(e) schedules;
	(f) post office guide;
	(g) trade journals;
	(h) Hansard; and,
	(i) Internet, <i>search engines</i> .
8. describe proper techniques for receiving and relaying messages by telephone;	Telephone techniques: (a) telephone etiquette; (b) recording systems; (c) receiving and delivering messages; (d) use of the telephone directory; (e) maintaining a personal and a company directory; (f) functions and operations of <i>automated</i> switchboards; and, (g) paging devices.
9. Assess the communication services offered by telecommunication providers;	Telephone services: (a) local, long distance and overseas calls; (b) station-to-station, person-to-person, collect calls, emergency calls; (c) conference calls, video conferencing; (d) call waiting, call forwarding, voice mail; speed dialing, caller identification;

SECTION II: COMMUNICATON (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
	(e) phone cards; electronic top-up machines;
	(f) mobile phones; text messaging; instant messaging;
	(g) Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP); and,
	(h) Skype.
10. describe the services available for dispatching mail;	(a) Courier services: (i) local; and, (ii) overseas. (b) Postal services: (i) classification of mail (priority, first class, express, standard); (ii) delivery options (registered, express delivery, recorded delivery, poste restante); and, (iii) <i>courier services; Skybox.</i>
11. outline procedures for sending and receiving parcels; and,	Procedures for sending and receiving parcels: (a) regulations for sending and receiving money and other valuables; (b) parcel post services - nature and use; and, (c) packaging.
12. outline procedures for dealing with incoming and outgoing mail in large and small offices.	(a) Procedures for dealing with incoming mail: (i) receiving; (ii) recording; (iii) stamping;

SECTION II: COMMUNICATON (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
	(iv) routing of mail;
	(v) treatment of remittances and registered mail; and,
	(vi) archiving.
	(b) Procedures for dispatching mail:
	(i) sorting of mail;
	(ii) preparation of mailing lists; and,
	(iii) use of postage books.
	(c) Automation of mailing activities in large offices:
	(i) <i>mail merge</i> ;
	(ii) addressing machines;
	(iii) franking machines;
	(iv) letter openers;
	(v) folding machines;
	(vi) collating machines; and,
	(vii) sealing machines.

Suggested teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

1. *Have groups of students role play using different communication channels and techniques to send and receive messages. Different aspects should be critiqued by peers.*

These activities may be recorded and played back where possible so that students can hear and/or see nuances such as the sound of your voice on a recording, and body language due to involuntary actions and posture.

Discussions should be used to encourage students to use the correct jargon and to clarify concepts.

SECTION II: COMMUNICATON (cont'd)

2. *Arrange field trip to a telecommunications facility and have students use relevant data collection instruments to investigate and document the types of communication devices seen there. They should also observe and document aspects such as how these devices are used, and the manners of the operators and other personnel. Where possible, arrangements should be made for students to get hands-on experiences during this field trip. Trips should be followed by class discussions and/ or written activities which require students to report their findings and assess the situations observed, including services provided.*
3. *Arrange field trip to a traditional postal service organization and have students use relevant data collection instruments to investigate and document the postal equipment, supplies, and services provided there. They should also observe and document aspects such as how these devices are used, and the manners of the operators and other personnel. Where possible, arrangements should be made for students to get hands-on experiences during this field trip. Trips should be followed by class discussions and/ or written activities which require students to report their findings and assess the situations observed, including services provided.*
4. *Arrange field trip to a courier service company and have students use relevant data collection instruments to investigate and document the types of equipment, supplies, communication devices seen, and services provided there. They should also observe and document aspects such as how the devices and equipment are used, and the manners of the operators and other personnel. Where possible, arrangements should be made for students to get hands-on experiences during this field trip. Trips should be followed by class discussions and/ or written activities which require students to report their findings and assess the situations observed, including services provided.*

◆ SECTION III: RECRUITMENT AND ORIENTATION

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. identify sources of information on job opportunities;	Sources of job information: (a) newspapers; (b) employment agency; (c) <i>Internet</i>, for example, Facebook, Twitter, <i>company websites</i>; (d) personal contact; (e) trade journals; (f) company newsletters; (g) magazines; and, (h) guidance counsellor.
2. outline factors to be considered when seeking employment;	Factors to consider when seeking a position: (a) career interest; (b) job descriptions; (c) personal taste; (d) training and qualifications; (e) salary, fringe benefits; (f) location; (g) image of the firm; and, (h) career advancement.
3. prepare applications for a job;	Procedures for making applications: (i) application forms; (ii) letters;

SECTION III: RECRUITMENT AND ORIENTATION (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
	(iii) curriculum vitae;
	(iv) résumé; and,
	(v) portfolio.
	(b) Follow-up letters for each of the following conditions:
	(i) no reply received to application;
	(ii) acceptance of job; and,
	(iii) non-acceptance of job.
4. prepare other types of letters;	Prepare various types of letters
	(a) resignation from job;
	(b) application for leave;
	(c) application for vacation; and,
	(d) acknowledgement.
5. explain factors to be considered when preparing for a job interview; and,	Factors to be considered:
	(a) selection of attire;
	(b) deportment;
	(c) research on organization;
	(d) types of questions that may be asked by the interviewer and the interviewee; and,
	(e) Portfolio; evidence of qualifications.
6. demonstrate knowledge of the requirements of the work environment.	Knowledge of the work environment:
	(a) labour laws; and,
	(b) culture of school vs. organization.

SECTION III: RECRUITMENT AND ORIENTATION (cont'd)

Suggested teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

- 1. Have students (form groups and) conduct research on sources of job information, and list the features, strengths, and weaknesses of each. The findings should be shared in class and used to guide class discussion.*
- 2. Have students form small groups and brainstorm factors that should be considered when a person is seeking a job. This should be followed up by sharing using the jigsaw method and general class discussion. Students should then compare the results of the activities and fill in the gaps as necessary.*
- 3. Have students select jobs advertised via newspapers or online, and prepare relevant documents such as application letters/ forms, CVs and acceptance letters. These are to be used to create a file using appropriate principles and standards.*

◆ SECTION IV: RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. describe the characteristics of an information management system;	(a) Characteristics of an information management system: (i) <i>data input/data storage;</i> (ii) <i>database management system;</i> (iii) <i>processing: batch and real time;</i> (iv) retrieval of information; (v) compressing (zipping) files for storage; and, (vi) archiving. (b) Characteristics of an effective records management system: (i) Access protocols; (ii) Security: physical and password; (iii) accountability; and, (iv) expansion.
2. describe the duties of a records management clerk;	Duties of a records management clerk: (a) preparing documents; (b) processing data; (c) managing records; and, (d) retrieving <i>information/records</i>.
3. maintain a records management system by electronic and other means;	(a) Classifications of Record Management Systems: (i) alphabetical; (ii) geographical; (iii) subject; (iv) numerical; and, (v) chronological.

SECTION IV: RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
	(b) Indexing: Methods and procedures for cross-referencing: (i) out sheets; (ii) tickler file; (iii) card indicators; (iv) colour coding; and, (v) searches, shared database.
4. outline the procedures for dealing with inactive files;	Methods and procedures for dealing with inactive files: (a) use of microfilming; (b) retention periods; (c) disposal of files; (d) archiving; (e) <i>backing up to external storage media; and,</i> (f) <i>Electronic Documents and Records Management System.</i>
5. describe the main legal stipulations governing access to and retention of documents;	Regulations related to: (a) the right of access; (b) limitations on the right of access; (c) infringement of copyright; (d) defamation; (e) breach of confidence; (f) secrecy provisions; and, (g) <i>Freedom of Information Act.</i>

SECTION IV: RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
6. explain the use of filing equipment and supplies in records and information management; and,	Filing equipment and supplies: (a) filing cabinets and folders; index cards; (b) minute sheets; (c) charge-out cards; (d) dividers; (e) treasury tags; (f) fasteners; (g) microfilm, <i>microfiche</i>; and, (h) external <i>storage media</i>.
7. differentiate between centralised and departmental records management systems.	(a) Centralised and departmental/decentralised records management systems, advantages and disadvantages. (b) Organisation and operation of records management systems for small and large-scale businesses.

Suggested Teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

1. *Divide class into groups and have each conduct research on regulations related to access to and retention of documents. Their work is to be presented to the class and supported by relevant examples especially of cases in their territories.*
2. *Arrange field trips for students to visit a warehouse and a records office, and use relevant instruments and techniques to investigate and document their findings on the information management systems found there. Their findings should guide class discussions as they compare strategies/ methodologies used in each type of organisation, as well as the extent to which each complied with established standards.*

SECTION IV: RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (cont'd)

3. *Divide students into groups and assign them to departments in the school, such as administrative office where they engage in hands-on activities including filing, batching, and other relevant activities for short periods of time. Ask personnel in these departments to provide on-the-job training to support what would have been covered theoretically in class, then grade students' performance and give narrative feedback to justify the ratings given.*

◆ SECTION V: RECEPTION AND HOSPITALITY

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. assess the contribution of the reception desk to the welfare of the organisation;	Contribution of reception desk: (a) maintaining effective inter-personal relationships between the organisation and members of the public; and, (b) promoting goodwill and a positive image of the business.
2. identify the duties and attributes of a receptionist;	(a) Duties and responsibilities of a receptionist: (i) receiving and screening visitors; (ii) introducing visitors using appropriate protocol; (iii) maintaining the reception register (manual, electronic); (iv) operating a switchboard; (v) receiving letters and parcels; (vi) managing and maintaining the reception area; and, (vii) receiving and filing business cards. (b) Attributes: (i) appropriate personal appearance and grooming; (ii) good temperament; (iii) willingness to use initiative; (iv) tact; and, (v) articulate.

SECTION V: RECEPTION AND HOSPITALITY (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
3. manage appointments for an executive using electronic or manual systems; and,	Managing appointments: (a) procedures for making and cancelling appointments on behalf of an executive; (b) maintaining a diary; (c) rescheduling; and, (d) online schedules.
4. explain the importance and use of electronic and manual reminder systems.	Importance and use of the following reminder systems: (a) tickler files; (b) diaries; and, (c) calendars (<i>electronic/manual</i>).

Suggested teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

1. *Assign individual students to the Administrative Office of the school for viable periods of time, during which they act in roles such as receptionists, secretaries, operating switchboard, and answering telephones. They should document and reflect on their experiences.*
2. **Have students form small groups and simulate an interview. One person will be the interviewee and the others will play different roles such as receptionist, and interview panel member.*

Attention should be paid to relevant areas such as deportment, appropriate list of questions prepared and asked by panel, and criteria or rubrics used to rate the applicant.

3. ** Design various forms, for example, appraisal.*
4. ** Students prepare a portfolio to include resumes, letter of application; application forms; job specification; related advertisement; related documents (proof of qualification), follow-up letters; letters of application; resignation.*

**Also appropriate for Section 8*

◆ SECTION VI: MEETINGS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. define terms associated with business meetings;	Familiarity with terms associated with business meetings, including: (a) ad hoc; (b) verbatim; (c) quorum; (d) casting vote; (e) adjourn; (f) postpone; (g) cancel; (h) proposal; (i) motion; and, (j) resolution.
2. <i>prepare documents associated with meetings;</i>	Preparation of various documents used at meetings (a) <i>notice;</i> (b) <i>agenda; and,</i> (c) <i>minutes.</i>
3. <i>discuss the roles of personnel associated with meetings;</i>	Roles and function of personnel associated with meetings (a) <i>chair;</i> (b) <i>secretary;</i> (c) <i>treasurer;</i> (d) <i>proxy; and,</i> (e) <i>ex-officio.</i>

SECTION VI: MEETINGS (cont'd)

4. list the various types of meetings;

Types of meetings:

- (a) **Formal**
 - (i) General Meeting;
 - (ii) Annual General Meeting;
 - (iii) Extraordinary General Meeting;
 - (iv) Board and Committee meeting; and,
 - (v) Statutory Meetings.
- (b) **Informal**
 - (i) Staff Meeting; and,
 - (ii) Departmental Meeting.

5. organise different types of meetings;

- (a) **The importance of meetings and their purpose.**
- (b) **Requirements before, during and after meetings:**
 - (i) supplies and equipment for different meetings;
 - (ii) Meeting Protocol, for example, seating arrangements; and,
 - (iii) Robert's Rule of Order governing meetings.

6. *discuss* basic legal requirements of Annual General Meetings; and,

Knowledge of the following Acts and terms:

- (a) Company's Act of relevant country;
- (b) management *structure* of companies;
- (c) officers, shareholders of companies;
- (d) meeting proxies;
- (e) corporate records; and,
- (f) Articles of Incorporation.

SECTION VI: MEETINGS (cont'd)

7. outline the follow-up procedures related to decisions made at meetings.
 - (a) **Importance of minutes.**
 - (b) **Follow-up procedures related to decisions:**
 - (i) filing and indexing of minutes;
 - (ii) acting on decisions taken at the meeting;
 - (iii) circulation of action sheet; and,
 - (iv) circulation of minutes.

Suggested teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

1. *Have individual students attend a meeting, collect related documents (within legal and ethical parameters), and observe the proceedings in order to facilitate a critique based on the principles and concepts related to meetings. Their presentations should include the identification of the strengths and weaknesses as well as a list of recommendations as necessary.*
2. *Each member of the class should arrange at least one meeting for an in-school or out-of-school club or group of which they are a member. All relevant documents should be prepared and included in a portfolio. (This may be a hard copy or an e-portfolio as is convenient to your setting).*

◆ SECTION VII: TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. outline the types of information and services required for travel;	Information and services required for travel: - tickets, e-tickets; - preparation of itineraries; - scheduling of appointments; - making hotel reservations; and, - preparing travel folders.
2. calculate time based on knowledge of time differences between two or more countries;	- Time zones and their significance. - Expression of time in 12-hour, 24-hour format.
3. outline procedure for making travel arrangements;	<i>Procedures for making travel arrangements:</i> <i>Preferred dates of travel;</i> <i>Preferred time of travel;</i> <i>Selecting the appropriate carrier for the destination;</i> <i>Ascertaining health and visa requirements;</i> <i>Restrictions for entering destination;</i> <i>Alternative travel routes and cost; and,</i> <i>Other services such as accommodation, travel, tours that may be made.</i>
4. interpret schedules;	Air, sea and land travel schedules.
5. <i>explain the necessity for various travel documents; and,</i>	Documents <i>that may be</i> required for travel: - passport; - visa; - entry permit; and, - health certificate.

SECTION VII: TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS (cont'd)

6. determine monetary instruments for use during travel.	Monetary instruments: (a) travellers cheques; (b) debit/credit cards; (c) letters of credit; (d) bank draft; and, (e) cash.

Suggested Teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

1. *Engage students in a research activity to collect travel documents such as e-tickets, traditional/hard copies of tickets, schedules/itineraries, passports, visas, cheques, banking cards and drafts. These are to be included in their scrapbooks and incorporated into their SBA as appropriate.*
2. *Write the positions of some travelling officers as well as some international and local destinations on strips of paper and drop them in a box. Have students each pick a strip of paper from the box and work in random pairs as formed by the first person with the position of an officer/public figure matched with the first destination, until everyone has a partner.*

Each pair is responsible for preparing a travel itinerary for seven days for this person.

As far as is possible, the process should be authentic, and include the use of different media and strategies such as online searches, telephone calls, and e-mails. The results should include information such as flight numbers, times and dates, bus, train and ferry schedules, as well as available and suitable accommodation, and meal arrangements for the person and entourage where appropriate.

Each pair should prepare and submit a hard or soft copy of what would be finally given to the person for whom the preparations were made.

◆ SECTION VIII: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. describe the functions of the Human Resource Management office;	(a) Role and functions of the Human Resource Management office: (i) recruitment; (ii) induction; (iii) deployment; (iv) appraisal; (v) training; (vi) staff welfare; (vii) disciplinary procedures; and, (viii) job description. (b) Relationship with other departments and importance of the Human Resource Management office.
2. identify the duties and attributes of a clerk in the <i>Human Resource Management</i> office;	(a) Duties and attributes of a clerk in the Human Resource Management office: (i) <i>maintain database of personnel records;</i> (ii) <i>prepare for interviews;</i> (iii) <i>attend to staff welfare; and,</i> (iv) <i>assist with the functions of the Human Resource Management Office.</i> (b) Attributes (i) <i>confidentiality;</i> (ii) <i>patience; and,</i> (iii) <i>tact.</i>

SECTION VIII: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
3. identify the benefits of legislation related to workers' welfare;	Benefits as outlined in: (a) statutory provisions for employee protection; (b) ILO conventions (Factories Act - protective clothing and gear, workmen's compensation); (c) Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA); and, (d) Collective Agreements.
4. maintain records used in a human resources office; and,	Maintenance of Records: (a) contracts of employment, service records; (b) types of leave; (c) personal history/records; (d) appraisal forms; (e) job specification; and, (f) job description.
5. describe the factors that contribute to employee/labour turnover in an organisation.	(a) Internal factors: (i) working conditions; (ii) low salary; (iii) lack of job satisfaction; (iv) lack of training opportunities; (v) redundancy; and, (vi) resignation. (b) External factors: (i) state of the economy; (ii) better opportunities;

SECTION VIII: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
	(iii) competition for job placement;
	(iv) migration; and,
	(v) globalisation.

Suggested Teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

- 1. Invite HR manager to explain different aspects of this field. Have students prepare questions based on the topics in the Section as they prepare for the Question and Answer session.*
- 2. Students prepare a portfolio to include resumes, letter of application; job specification; related advertisement; related documents (proof of qualification). Engage students in activities for them to continue to build on their portfolio, scrapbook and SBA. For example, they can go on site visits to continue research and for them to obtain and discuss documents such as contracts, appraisal forms, job specifications, job descriptions, and Acts/laws/resolutions regarding workers' welfare.*
- 3. Teacher should identify cases in their countries and immediate environment where possible, where there has been staff turnover and have students identify and discuss the internal and external factors that contributed to this turnover.*

Using these cases as the subject of discussion students will role play a Radio or TV Talk Show in which the contributing factors are highlighted and recommendations made. Students should be guided to ensure that the discussions show clear understanding of concepts and content. That is, questions and answers should be based on the content, the jargon should be appropriately used, and recommendations are adequate and show a good understanding of the roles and functions of Human Resource Management.

** See Section 5 for other related activities.*

◆ SECTION IX: ACCOUNTS AND *FINANCIAL SERVICES*

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. describe the role and functions of the accounts office;	Role and functions of the accounts office: (a) preparation of payroll; (b) credit control; (c) collection of accounts; (d) treatment of debit and credit notes; (e) preparation of audit; and, (f) different types of bank accounts, for example, current, savings, fixed deposit.
2. identify the duties and attributes of a clerk in the accounts office;	(a) Duties of a clerk in the accounts office: (i) preparing payroll; (ii) writing cheques; (iii) reconciling accounts; (iv) making ledger entries; (v) preparing statement of accounts; (vi) writing up the cash book; and, (vii) preparing final accounts. (b) Attributes: (i) integrity; (ii) confidentiality; and, (iii) reliability.

SECTION IX: ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
3. <i>prepare</i> simple documents in the <i>accounts</i> office;	Documents: (a) <i>pay slip or payroll</i>; (b) currency memorandum; (c) debit and credit notes; (d) simple statements of account; and, (e) cheques.
4. identify resources used in the accounts office;	(a) Hardware resources: (i) calculators; (ii) adding machines; (iii) computers; and, (iv) printers; scanners; copiers. (b) Software resources (i) accounting packages; and, (ii) spreadsheet packages.
5. identify types of Financial Institutions;	(a) Credit Unions. (b) Commercial Banks. (c) Central Banks. (d) Insurance Companies. (e) Offshore Institutions. (f) Investment Companies. (g) Cambios/Bureaux de Change.

SECTION IX: ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
6. outline the procedures for making and receiving different types of payments;	Payment through Financial Institutions: (a) cash, cheques; (b) credit cards; (c) money orders, postal orders; (d) electronic transfers, credit transfers; (e) standing orders; (f) bank drafts; and, (g) letters of credit.
7. interpret the information on cheques;	Types of cheques: (a) open cheques; (b) certified/managers cheques; (c) counter cheques; (d) crossed cheques; and, (e) post-dated cheques/stale-dated cheques.
8. interpret entries in a bank statement;	Identification and interpretation of entries in a bank statement: (a) debit and credit entries; (b) service charges; (c) outstanding cheques; (d) outstanding deposits; (e) standing orders; (f) credit transfers;

SECTION IX: ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
	(g) interest paid and received; and,
	(h) (NSF) Insufficient funds/Refer to Drawer.
9. reconcile bank and cash book balances; and,	Procedures for reconciling:
	(a) bank statements with cash book balances; and,
	(b) cash book balances with bank statements.
10. prepare petty cash records.	Procedures for the payment and control of petty cash using the imprest system:
	(a) vouchers;
	(b) cash disbursements sheets; and,
	(c) summarising expenses.

Suggested Teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

- 1. Students should continue research and collect different artefacts for their scrap books. These should include types of cheques, bank drafts, pay slips, money orders, cards, payment vouchers, and bank statements.*
- 2. Students should visit different institutions from which they will collect, and prepare complete business forms.*
- 3. Students could visit an organization and observe their accounting and financial operations and relevant documents (to the extent that confidentiality and integrity would permit).*
- 4. In collaboration with the teacher(s) of Principles of Accounts and Principles of Business students could engage in accounting and financial services activities. For example, have students perform the role of payroll clerk. Identify the number of employees. Give criteria for staff members. Have students calculate basic pay, overtime pay and gross pay. Using fixed percentage students should be able to calculate Statutory Deductions, ITAX, NIS, prepare Currency Memorandum, write cheques, make entries in ledgers and cash books.*

◆ SECTION X: *PROCUREMENT AND INVENTORY MANAGEMENT*

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. describe the functions of the <i>procurement and inventory management</i> office;	(a) Role and functions of the <i>procurement</i> office: (i) determine items to purchase; (ii) liaise with other departments; and, (iii) manage inventory. (b) Terminology and abbreviations used in purchasing documents and literature: (i) free on board (F.O.B.); (ii) cost, insurance and freight (C.I.F.); (iii) errors and omissions excepted (E & O.E); (iv) cash on delivery (c.o.d.); (v) excluding works (ex works); and, (vi) discounts.
2. identify the duties and attributes of a clerk in the purchasing department;	(a) Duties of a purchasing clerk: (i) preparing and processing purchase <i>and stock</i> requisitions; (ii) filing of purchasing records; (iii) maintaining stock records; (iv) maintaining database of supplier records; and, (v) verifying orders received.

SECTION X: *PROCUREMENT AND INVENTORY MANAGEMENT (cont'd)*

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
	(b) Attributes
	(i) <i>integrity;</i>
	(ii) <i>honesty;</i>
	(iii) <i>initiative; and,</i>
	(iv) <i>detail oriented.</i>
3. outline procedures for purchasing goods and acquiring services;	(a) Factors influencing procedures:
	(i) <i>urgency;</i>
	(ii) <i>cost;</i>
	(iii) <i>incentives; and,</i>
	(iv) <i>availability.</i>
	(b) Procedures for purchasing:
	(i) <i>catalogues and price lists;</i>
	(ii) <i>tenders/inquiries;</i>
	(iii) <i>quotations;</i>
	(iv) <i>e-commerce;</i>
	(v) <i>order placement; and,</i>
	(vi) <i>shipment/delivery.</i>
4. prepare documents used in the purchase of goods and services;	Preparation and interpretation of:
	(a) <i>requisition forms (purchase and stock); and,</i>
	(b) <i>order forms.</i>

SECTION X: *PROCUREMENT AND INVENTORY MANAGEMENT (cont'd)*

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
5. explain the importance of <i>inventory management</i> ;	Importance of <i>inventory management</i>: (a) prevention of pilferage; (b) control of inventory; (c) signaling of market trends; (d) availability of capital; (e) optimization of storage space; and, (f) Just-in-Time (JIT).
6. maintain stock records (manual and electronic).	Stock records: (a) stock requisition forms and stock cards; (b) storage of office supplies; (c) reporting on stock levels; - Last-in-First-Out (LIFO), First-in-First-Out (FIFO); Average Cost (AVCO); and, (d) use of software and electronic devices in stock control, including inventory software, bar code scanners.

Suggested teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

1. *Students could visit businesses to note electronic methods of procurement and inventory. (to the extent that confidentiality and integrity would permit). They should make notes which will be used to guide their discussions upon their return to the class.*
2. *Students should continue research and collection of different artefacts for their scrap books. These should include stock card, stock requisition forms, and order forms.*

SECTION X: PROCUREMENT AND INVENTORY MANAGEMENT (cont'd)

3. *In collaboration with the teacher(s) of Principles of Accounts, Principles of Business and Logistics and Supply Chain Operations, students could engage in procurement and inventory management activities. For example, have students simulate businesses where they order items and complete documents. Simulated exercises should include: FIFO- identify perishable items for example fruits, dated tin products. LIFO- identify seasonal goods for example items used only at certain times. Prepare stock card.*
4. *Invite resource persons, for example, from supermarket, the wharf, or airport, to discuss inventory management.*

◆ SECTION XI: SALES, *MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE*

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. explain the functions of staff involved in Sales, <i>marketing and Customer service</i> ;	(a) Functions of the sales office: (i) maintenance of sales records; (ii) calculation of commissions <i>and discount</i>; (iii) stock control; (iv) liaising with other departments; and, (v) customer follow-up. (b) Functions of the marketing office: (i) organising promotional activities; (ii) designing marketing strategies; (iii) budgeting; (iv) advertising; (v) branding; (vi) liaising with advertising entities internal and external to the office; and, (vii) developing new markets/new products. (c) Functions of the Customer Services Department (i) ensure customer satisfaction; (ii) handle customer complaints; (iii) advise customer on product offerings; (iv) answer questions/queries; and, (v) liaise between customer and company.

SECTION XI: SALES, MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
2. identify duties of a clerk in the sales office;	(a) Duties of a clerk in the Sales office: (i) preparing sales documents; (ii) filing of sales records; and, (iii) maintaining mailing lists. (b) Duties of a marketing clerk: (i) Assist in preparing advertising material; (ii) assisting with promotional activities; (iii) maintaining mailing lists and records; and, (iv) assist in preparing press releases. (c) Duties of a clerk in the customer services department: (i) interface with customer; (ii) liaise between customer and company; (iii) inform customers on promotions and offers; and, (iv) answer customer queries.
3. identify skills required by a clerk in the sales marketing and customer services <i>offices</i> ;	Skills required of a clerk in the Sales office: (a) basic information technology; (b) <i>proficiency in the use of</i> productivity tools; (c) data entry; (d) <i>proficiency in the use of</i> organizational tools; (e) filing; and, (f) literacy/numeracy.

SECTION XI: SALES, MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
4. prepare <i>documents used in sales and marketing</i> ;	Preparation of documents, including: (a) quotations; (b) invoices; and, (c) proforma invoices.
5. distinguish among the different types of discounts;	Types of Discounts: (a) trade; (b) cash; (c) special/loyalty cards; (d) quantity; and, (e) goods on consignment.
6. outline the functions of the Corporate Communications Clerk.	Functions of the Corporate Communications Clerk: Assists in: (a) promoting and enhancing the corporate image of the company; (b) interfacing with media houses, advertising agencies; (c) producing company newsletter/magazine/calendar; (d) upkeep of company's website; (e) <i>planning</i> family day activities; and, (f) coordinating and sponsoring events that show the company's corporate social responsibility.

SECTION XI: SALES, MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE (cont'd)

Suggested teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

- 1. Students should continue research and collection of different artefacts for their scrap books. These should include sales, marketing and customer service strategies used by organizations.*
- 2. Invite resource persons from organisations to give presentations/ have discussions with students.*
- 3. In collaboration with teachers in other subject areas such as Visual Arts, English, Music, Information Technology, Physical Education, and Principles of Business, arrange for students to engage in activities where they prepare and or use sales, marketing, advertising and promotional materials such as invoices, calendars, loyalty cards, newsletters, magazines, websites, and press releases. During these activities they should simulate the duties and functions of key persons in sales, marketing and customer service.*
- 4. Arrange for students to participate in role play for different scenarios (for example, pleasant/unpleasant customer). Have the class make notes and give feedback based on the principles and concepts outlined in the syllabus.*

◆ SECTION XII: *OPERATIONS, DISPATCH AND TRANSPORT SERVICES*

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
1. explain the functions of the <i>operations, despatch and transport</i> office;	(a) Functions of the <i>operations</i> office: (i) coordinating activities related to production; (ii) protecting workers and the environment; (iii) <i>maintenance</i> of factory records; (iv) <i>quality assurance; awareness of standards, ISO;</i> (v) costing of finished products; and, (vi) liaising with other departments. (b) Functions of the <i>despatch</i> office: (i) maintain documents for despatch of goods; (ii) maintain database of couriers/contractors/agents; (iii) work in collaboration with the sales office; (iv) adhere to statutory requirements; and, (v) coordination of delivery of goods. (c) Functions of the <i>transport</i> office: (i) maintain transportation records; (ii) maintain destination sheets; (iii) liaising with customers; and, (iv) maintenance of vehicles.

SECTION XII: OPERATIONS, DISPATCH AND TRANSPORT SERVICES (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
2. explain the duties of a clerk in a operations, dispatch and transport office; and,	(a) Duties of a clerk in the operations office: (i) preparation of shift roster; (ii) preparation of daily production reports; (iii) preparation of documents used in production; and, (iv) completion of forms used in factory office. For example, job cards, job cost cards, cost analysis, planning masters, cost cards and time cards. (b) Duties of a clerk in a dispatch office: (i) completion of documents for dispatched goods; (ii) storage of information of couriers employed; (iii) maintaining database of couriers, transport contractors and agents; (iv) liaising with sales, customer services and marketing departments; (v) adhering to statutory requirements; and, (vi) coordination of delivery of goods. (c) Duties of a clerk in the transport office: (i) maintain transportation records; (ii) <i>maintain destination sheets;</i> (iii) <i>liaise with customers; and,</i> (iv) <i>schedule maintenance of vehicles.</i>

SECTION XII: OPERATIONS, DISPATCH AND TRANSPORT SERVICES (cont'd)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CONTENT
Students should be able to:	
3. <i>interpret information on prepare documents used in operations, despatch and transport.</i>	Documents: (a) delivery schedules; (b) destination sheets; (c) delivery notes, bills of lading; (d) customs forms; (e) insurance certificates; (f) airway bills; (g) manifest; (h) export and import license; (i) advice note; (j) certificate of origin; and, (k) freight note.

Suggested teaching and Learning Activities

To facilitate students' attainment of the objectives of the Syllabus, teachers are advised to engage students in the teaching and learning activities below. These activities are designed to support a learner-centred, collaborative approach, and incorporate appropriate ICT tools where necessary while catering to students with various learning styles.

1. *Student tours to manufacturing or transportation enterprises to view operations, dispatch and transport services. Examine roles and functions of different departments or individuals in these organizations, and compare with notes from source books.*
2. *In collaboration with the teacher(s) of Principles of Accounts, Principles of Business and Logistics and Supply Chain Operations, students could visit a manufacturing enterprise or a similar organization which forms part of a supply chain. They will use appropriate instruments and techniques to collect and document relevant data on the operation, despatch and transport services provided, and the way in which the organisation carries out its operations.*

SECTION XII: OPERATIONS, DISPATCH AND TRANSPORT SERVICES (cont'd)

3. *After students would have researched and been guided through discussion of relevant concepts, approaches and jargon, teacher should identify video presentations of companies' operations, and have students watch these with the main purpose of critiquing them to show their understanding of what they found during their research as well as what was shared during the in-class discussions.*
4. *In small groups, students should be asked to p Plan an activity and calculate the total cost of the activity. Different items should be listed. For example, the cost of labour and material. Students should prepare documents for different costs. As much as is possible, students should be encouraged to engage in meaningful activities which allow them to be completing aspects of their SBAs as they collaborate with the groups to which they are assigned.*

◆ GUIDELINES TO TEACHERS FOR THE CONDUCT OF SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

School-Based Assessment is an integral part of student assessment in the course covered by this syllabus. It proposes to assist students with acquiring specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that are critical to the subject. The activities for the Assessment are linked to the specific SECTIONS of the syllabus and should form part of the learning activities enabling the student to achieve the related objectives. It should be based on an investigation into a real or virtual office. *Students are encouraged to work in groups and submit one report.*

During the course of study of this subject, students obtain marks for the competence they develop and demonstrate when undertaking their School-Based Assessment assignments. These marks contribute to the final marks and grades that are awarded to students for their performance in the examination.

The guidelines provided in this syllabus for selecting appropriate tasks are expected to assist teachers and students with the selection of assignments that are valid for the purpose of School-Based Assessment. These guidelines should assist teachers with awarding marks according to the degree of achievement of the candidates in the School-Based Assessment component of the course. In order to ensure that the scores awarded by teachers are aligned with CXC standards, the Council undertakes the moderation of a sample of School-Based Assessment assignments marked by each teacher.

School-Based Assessment provides an opportunity to individualise a part of the curriculum to meet the needs of students. It facilitates feedback to the students at various stages of the experience. This helps to build the self – confidence of the students as they proceed with their studies. School-Based Assessment further facilitates the development of essential research skills that allow the student to function more effectively in his or her chosen vocation. School-Based Assessment, therefore, makes a significant and unique contribution to the development of relevant skills in the students. It also provides an instrument for testing them and rewarding them for their achievements.

RATIONALE FOR SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT IN OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

The School-Based Assessment component of the Office Administration Syllabus is a single guided research project consisting of objectives from one or more of the SECTIONS in the syllabus. The project is intended to develop in the candidate an interest in self – directed investigation and the collection of data in a scientific manner. The execution of the SBA project should lead to a sense of accomplishment while facilitating the development of the basic skills of research. Teachers should regard School-Based Assessment as an integral part of teaching the syllabus and not as a separate entity.

The School-Based Assessment should:

1. provide the candidate with an opportunity to investigate an area of special interest within the prescribed syllabus;
2. develop the candidate's ability to conduct an enquiry and present the findings; and,
3. provide an opportunity for the teacher to be involved in the evaluation process.

SBA REQUIREMENTS

Every candidate who enters for the Office Administration examination must submit an individual project. Students may work individually or in groups to investigate a specific problem. However, each candidate must produce an individual project. No two projects from the same group should be identical. The project should not exceed **1,000** words in length and should include charts, graphs, tables and pictures that are relevant to the topic being studied.

The teacher will be required to approve the problem to be investigated, guide the candidate during the process of investigation, mark the completed work according to the guidelines provided by CXC and submit the marks to CXC by April 30 in the year of the examination.

SBA PROJECT COMPONENTS

A candidate's project should be presented in a folder bearing the candidate's number, name of subject and the date submitted. The project *may be submitted electronically and* must be set out according to the criteria outlined below. The project report will include:

- (a) title page should be repeated for each section;
- (b) table of contents should be relevant to each section;
- (c) aims and objectives must be stated;
- (d) methodology employed;
- (e) letter, schedule, regulations, forms, graphics, charts; and,
- (f) report (500-750 words), discussing:
 - (i) findings;
 - (ii) limitations; and,
 - (iii) recommendations.

TOPICS FOR SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

The project **MUST** be drawn from one or more aspects of the 12 SECTIONS of the syllabus. Teachers are asked to assist candidates with the selection of topics appropriate for research from within the prescribed Sections stated below. Candidates must choose tasks that are relevant to jobs performed by entry – level personnel in the various departments of organisations.

Candidates are to choose from the following combination of topics when attempting the School-Based Assessment:

School-Based Assessment Topics to be tested in the following years:

- 1. 2015 - Office Orientation and Procurement and Inventory Management.
- 2. 2016 - Records and Information Management and *Sales, Marketing and Customer Service*.
- 3. 2017 - Human Resource Management, Travel Arrangements and *Recruitment and Orientation*.
- 4. 2018 - Reception and Hospitality and Meetings.
- 5. 2019 - *Communication and Operations, Dispatch and Transport Services*.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR THE SBA

Criterion: Preparation

1. TITLE

Select a suitable topic for the Project and state the title clearly. The project must be appropriate and relevant to the syllabus.

2. AIM

State the aims and objectives of the project. These should indicate what you hope to accomplish/discover/learn more about in carrying out the Project.

3. CORRESPONDENCE

There should be a copy of a letter that you sent asking for permission to conduct the Project. For example, seeking permission to visit a business place, an institution, an organisation seeking to interview or observe person(s) on the job. It is expected that candidates will use a business format and the language associated with the subject.

Criterion: Gathering Data

1. METHODOLOGY

Give a clear description of how, when and from whom you gathered information and indicate the methods used to gather the information. Indicate if you used telephone interviews, questionnaires or observations.

2. QUESTIONS

List the exact wording of questions asked and to whom they were directed. These should be relevant to learning more about the topic of the Project.

3. SCHEDULE

The Schedule should be in a table format with three columns under the headings DATE, ACTIVITY, and COMMENT. The dates should state on what date or over what time period the activity took place. Activities should state exactly what took place. Comments should indicate information such as the problems encountered, the need for repeating an activity, meeting with a person or engaging in any kind of follow-up activity.

4. REGULATIONS

As a 'visitor, 'observer' you would have to be aware of some of the regulations, staff rules, health and safety practices that applied in the work environment where you carried out your project. List ONE and indicate how it was relevant to your project.

Criterion: Presentation

1. REPORT

The written report component should be 500 – 750 words of the 1000 words required for the project. The report must include:

- (a) discussion of the findings (*in relation to objectives*);
- (b) limitations of the research; and,
- (c) recommendations on how the efficiency of the office can be improved using technology.

2. OFFICE EQUIPMENT

The focus here will be on the development of candidates' competence and also the efficiency of equipment used in the office and the suitability of the equipment for the tasks for which they are used. This information must be recorded in a table format under the headings DATE, EQUIPMENT USED, PURPOSE, and SUITABILITY FOR TASK.

Candidates without access to equipment should make a statement about the improvement of efficiency in the completion of tasks with the use of different types of equipment based on their research.

SOURCES OF DATA AND INFORMATION

The Research activity for the SBA must be based on *SECTIONS* in the syllabus that could be combined to investigate a problem or issue drawn from authentic practices in the modern day office. Primary and secondary sources of data can be obtained directly from business organisations or simulations should be created which imitate the conditions in the literature on Office Administration. Regardless of the source, the candidate must observe rules of copyright and intellectual property laws.

MANAGEMENT OF THE PROJECT

The teacher must:

- 1. assist candidates in delineating suitable titles from the topics suggested for research; the topic must be relevant to entry – level personnel;
- 2. approve candidates' research topics;
- 3. advise candidates about the final date for completion and submission of the project;
- 4. ensure that syllabus content relevant to the project are adequately covered;
- 5. advise candidates about the nature of the task, the scope and depth required to achieve it and the availability of resource material;
- 6. monitor candidates' progress by advising them of the quality of their work and recommending ways to improve the quality of the project;
- 7. ensure that the guidelines are closely followed and the criteria are adequately met;

8. collect and mark candidates' projects; and,
9. keep records of candidates' marks and submit these, together with samples of candidates' work, as requested by CXC. *Submission must be made via the SBA Data Capture Module of the Online Registration System (ORS) found on the Council's website www.cxc.org*

DETAILED CRITERIA AND MARK SCHEME

CRITERION: 1 Preparation – Total 13 marks	Descriptor	Marks
The candidate has:		
1. included a title page; (maximum 1 mark)	- Title page includes project title and names of candidate, school and teacher, territory, candidate number as a header. - Title page is incomplete.	1 0
2. included a table of contents; (maximum 2 marks)	- Table of contents includes: (a) a heading and a list of topics; (b) page numbers.	1 1
3. stated the title of the project; (maximum 2 marks)	- Title of project is related to the objectives in the syllabus and to the business being studied. - Title of project is outside the scope of the syllabus or not clearly stated.	2 1
4. listed TWO aims of the project; (maximum 2 marks)	- Two Aims of the project are relevant, unambiguous and clearly stated. - One Aim of the project is irrelevant, ambiguous or not clearly stated.	2 1
5. listed TWO functions of the relevant department <i>of the firm chosen for the project;</i> and, (maximum 2 marks)	2 functions accurately listed. 1 function accurately listed.	2 1

CRITERION: 1 Preparation – Total 13 marks	Descriptor	Marks
6. prepared ONE piece of correspondence requesting permission to conduct the project. (maximum 4 marks) <i>NB. No marks will be awarded for correspondence not composed by the student as evidenced by official circular letter from teacher or principal.</i>	• Correspondence incorporates all aspects of a business letter including: (a) matching salutation/complimentary close; (b) correct grammar/ spelling (no errors); (c) relevant content; (d) appropriate presentation.	1 1 1 1
	TOTAL	13 marks

CRITERION 2 Gathering Data – Total 15 marks	Descriptor	Marks
The candidate has:		
1. described the methodology employed for the project; (maximum 3 marks)	• A specimen of a data gathering instrument is submitted. • An explanation of why the particular instrument was chosen above all others is given. • An explanation of how the instrument was used is given.	1 1 1
2. listed FIVE questions asked of personnel of the firm selected for the project; (maximum 3 marks) NB. The questions may be taken from the data gathering instrument.	• Five questions are relevant to the aims of the project, clear and unambiguous. • Three to four questions are relevant to the aims of the project, clear and unambiguous. • One to two questions are relevant to the aims of the project, clear and unambiguous.	3 2 1
3. submitted a schedule of activities for conducting the project; and, (maximum 5 marks)	• Table provided with the headings showing 'Dates', 'Activities' and 'Comments' with 10 – 12 activities listed. • Sequence of activities is relevant to the project and comments support the follow – up actions or the decisions made. – 1 mark for every 3 activities	1 1 -4
4. submitted evidence of regulations and Policies governing the firm selected for the project. (maximum 4 marks)	• ONE piece of legislation governing the work place is referenced. • ONE piece of legislation governing the work place is referenced.	1 1

CRITERION 2 Gathering Data – Total 15 marks	Descriptor	Marks
	An explanation of how the candidate became aware of the legislation is given.	1
	ONE of the health and safety practices observed when carrying out the Project is stated.	1
	ONE staff rule with which the candidate had to comply in carrying out the Project is stated.	1
	TOTAL	15 marks

CRITERION 3 Presentation – Total 22 marks	Descriptor	Marks
The candidate has:		
1. presented a written report; (maximum 8 marks)	<i>Limitations relevant and clearly stated.</i> <i>Limitations relevant but not clearly stated.</i> <i>Findings relevant and clearly discussed.</i> <i>Findings relevant but not clearly discussed.</i> <i>Recommendations relevant and clearly discussed.</i> <i>Recommendations relevant but not clearly discussed.</i>	2 1 3-4 1-2 2 1
2. assessed the impact of office equipment used in the business selected for the project; (maximum 4 marks)	- A 4 – column table completed with headings “Date”, “Equipment used”, “Purpose of equipment” and “Suitability for tasks” is completed. <i>Accurate response on purpose and suitability of equipment for task.</i>	1 1-3
3. prepared a bibliography acknowledging all sources of information in alphabetical order; (maximum 2 marks)	- For persons interviewed, list comprises date, place and job title. - For publications list comprises the names of the author, publisher and year published. - For Internet sites list comprises the address of the website, names of authors and organizations and dates accessed.	2
4. presented information in a logical manner using correct grammar; and, (maximum 4 marks)	Information is well presented and ideas are communicated in a highly effective manner with no spelling or grammatical errors.	4

CRITERION 3 Presentation – Total 22 marks	Descriptor	Marks
	Information is presented in a very good and meaningful manner with no more than two spelling or grammatical errors.	3
	Information is fairly well organised and ideas are communicated satisfactorily with no more than two spelling or grammatical errors.	2
	Information showed weaknesses in syntax, spelling, punctuation or the sequencing of ideas.	1
5. completed project with all required components in an acceptable manner. (maximum 4 marks)	All required components included.	1
	Use of appropriate chart/graphics to compliment project.	1
	Overall appearance of project:	2
	- very good; - adequate.	1
	TOTAL	22 marks

Western Zone Office
September 2017

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate®



OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Specimen Papers and Mark Schemes/Keys

Specimen Papers:

- Paper 01
- Paper 02
- Paper 032

Mark Schemes and Keys:

- Paper 01
- Paper 02
- Paper 032



C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION**

SPECIMEN

**MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS
FOR**

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 01

READ THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

Each item in this test has four suggested answers lettered (A), (B), (C), (D). Read each item you are about to answer and decide which choice is best.

Sample Item

A cheque is usually crossed in order to

- (A) prevent theft
- (B) provide a means of tracing it
- (C) supply a special endorsement
- (D) allow a particular person to cash it

Sample Answer



The best answer to this item is “provide a means of tracing it”, so answer space (B) has been shaded.

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1. Which of the following organizations will at some time be involved in office activities?

I. Schools
II. Recreational centres
III. Hair-dressing salons
IV. Departmental stores

(A) I only
(B) I and IV only
(C) I, III and IV only
(D) I, II, III and IV

2. You are a clerk in a small organization. Your supervisor is the secretary, and the head of the organization is the General Manager. You feel that some improvements can be made in the filing system. Which of the following actions should you take?

(A) Discuss your ideas with the secretary.
(B) Make the changes you feel are necessary.
(C) Continue with the old system until you are asked for an opinion.
(D) Discuss your ideas with the General Manager.

3. Which of the following pieces of equipment would be MOST useful in an office where replicas of original documents are often needed?

(A) Photocopier
(B) Ink duplicator
(C) Spirit duplicator
(D) Offset litho machine

Item 4 refers to the following list of duties.

1. Ascertain value of production 2. Conserve time and materials 3. Maintain control over the stores 4. Provide figures for final accounts 5. Keep management informed at all points

4. The duties listed above could BEST be performed by the

(A) store clerk
(B) book keeper
(C) progress chaser
(D) cost accounts clerk

5. Your regular lunch hour is from 1200 hours to 1300 hours, but you have an appointment between 1300 hours and 1400 hours today. You should request

(A) the Supervisor to change your lunch hour
(B) that the Human Resource Manager change your working hours
(C) that a colleague explains your absence if anyone asks for you
(D) a switch today with a colleague who has lunch from 1300 hours to 1400 hours

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6. Which of the following factors can contribute to repetitive stress injuries?
- I. Poor posture
 - II. Prolonged computer use
 - III. Occasional breaks
- (A) I only
(B) I and II only
(C) II and III only
(D) I, II and III
7. An officer left last night for a three-day business conference in another Caribbean territory. You have just seen on your desk a copy of a short letter which you had prepared for his folder. Which of the following is the MOST appropriate action to take?
- (A) Send the details of the letter to him by electronic mail.
(B) Send a copy of the letter to him by special delivery.
(C) Tell him the details of the letter by telephone.
(D) Assume that he no longer requires the letter and file it.
8. The MOST appropriate purpose of a memorandum is to communicate
- (A) within an organization
(B) with external business associates
(C) informal confirmation of business messages received from external callers
9. Which of the following methods can be used for written communication to staff members?
- I. Circulars
 - II. Letters
 - III. Index cards on files
- (A) I only
(B) II only
(C) I and II only
(D) II and III only
10. Which of the following procedures may be used to find a telephone number in the yellow pages for Thompson Electrical Services?
- I. Look for the section headed Services.
 - II. Look for the section headed Electrical.
 - III. Look for Thompson Electrical Services.
- (A) III only
(B) I and III only
(C) II and III only
(D) I, II and III
11. Which of the following is NOT proper telephone etiquette in a business environment?
- (A) Answering the telephone as soon as it rings
(B) Thanking the customer for calling
(C) Allowing the person who called to end the conversation
(D) Answering the phone with a cheery "hello"

12. It is your first day at work. The office manager is discussing your duties with you, in her office. During the course of the meeting, she leaves the room to attend to another matter. While she is away, her cell phone which she had placed on the table rings. Which of the following is the MOST appropriate action for you to take?
- (A) Try to find her.
 - (B) Let the cell phone ring.
 - (C) Answer the cell phone.
 - (D) Ask someone to answer the cell phone.
13. A staff member has asked the receptionist to make a person-to-person call to Mr. Wray. Which of the following procedures should the receptionist use?
- (A) Request an appointment for the staff member to see Mr. Wray.
 - (B) Call Mr. Wray and ask him to contact the staff member at his convenience.
 - (C) Dial Mr. Wray's number and connect the staff member when Mr. Wray is on the line.
 - (D) Dial Mr. Wray's number and connect the staff member.
14. The time in England is 5 hours ahead of the time in Barbados. When it is 2:00 pm in Barbados, what time is it in England?
- (A) 0200 hours
 - (B) 1400 hours
 - (C) 1900 hours
 - (D) 2000 hours
15. Which of the following machines is NOT likely to be found in a mailing room?
- (A) Collating
 - (B) Sorting
 - (C) Franking
 - (D) Folding
16. To which of the following departments should the mail clerk in a large company send a letter which is addressed to the General Manager and which outlines a complaint about the non-delivery of an assignment of goods?
- (A) Sales
 - (B) Production
 - (C) General Administration
 - (D) Despatch and Transport
17. At XYZ Company, information from staff files which are currently kept in the general office has been leaked on many occasions. Which of the following actions would MOST likely increase employee data security?
- I. Use the alphabetic filing system for staff files.
 - II. Use the numeric filing system for staff files.
 - III. Ask each staff member to keep his/her file.
 - IV. Store all staff files in the Human Resources department.
- (A) I and III only
 - (B) II and III only
 - (C) II and IV only
 - (D) III and IV only

18. The accounts department has requested a file from the central filing department. Which of the following actions should the file clerk take?
- I. Make a record of the written request.
 - II. Complete an "out" sheet and place it in the file.
 - III. Ask the person receiving the file to sign for it.
 - IV. Send the file with a request for it to be returned in an hour's time.
- (A) I, II and III only
 - (B) I, II and IV only
 - (C) I, III and IV only
 - (D) II, III and IV only
19. In a terminal digit filing system, a folder in position 7 on shelf 4 of bay 36 should be numbered
- (A) 7436
 - (B) 4736
 - (C) 3674
 - (D) 3647
20. Which of the following files would be MOST suitable for filing petty cash vouchers?
- (A) Circular rotary
 - (B) Concertina
 - (C) Visible index
 - (D) Card wheel index
21. Microfilm will be MOST useful when there is limited space for the storage of
- (A) inactive files
 - (B) temporary files
 - (C) documents transferred from inactive files
 - (D) documents transferred between active files
22. Which of the following situations would MOST likely result in a supplier's file being classified as inactive?
- (A) A supplier now sells a wider range of goods.
 - (B) The organization has stopped buying from a particular supplier.
 - (C) The supplier with which the organization does business has changed its name.
 - (D) The supplier with which the organization does business has changed its business address.
23. Which of the following is/are NOT needed when using microfilming?
- (A) Printer
 - (B) Roll of film
 - (C) Aperture cards
 - (D) Magnetic tape
24. Which of the following are desirable attributes of a receptionist?
- I. Initiative
 - II. Courtesy
 - III. Influence
- (A) I and II only
 - (B) I and III only
 - (C) II and III only
 - (D) I, II and III

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25. A busy receptionist remembers having taken a call for a company executive from a regular client but cannot find a record of the message.
- Which of the following is the MOST appropriate action for the receptionist to take?
- (A) Decide not to mention the call.
 - (B) Hope that the client calls again.
 - (C) Call the client to get the information.
 - (D) Apologize to the executive and explain that he/she was busy.
26. A receptionist forgot to notify an executive of an appointment with a consultant. When the consultant arrives for the appointment, the receptionist should immediately
- (A) ask the executive if he/she would meet with the consultant
 - (B) send the consultant into the executive's office
 - (C) offer to make another appointment for the consultant
 - (D) tell the consultant that she made a mistake about the date
27. The receptionist has been informed that Mr. Bell will be out of the office for the day. She has noticed that he has a number of appointments scheduled for that day. What action should she take?
- (A) Explain his absence to clients when they come to the office.
 - (B) Notify clients by telephone and offer to make new appointments.
 - (C) Postpone all appointments for that day by letter.
 - (D) Remind Mr. Bell of his appointments and suggest that he uses another day to be out of the office.
28. From which of the following can a person who is travelling overseas obtain foreign currency?
- I. Commercial Bank
 - II. Central Bank/Treasury
 - III. Travel agent
 - IV. Embassy of the overseas country
- (A) I only
 - (B) I and II only
 - (C) I, II and III only
 - (D) I, II, III and IV
29. Assume that you have been elected to be secretary of your school's Thrift Society. One of your duties will be the preparation of meeting agendas. Which of the following gives the CORRECT sequence of items on an agenda?
- I. Matters arising
 - II. New business
 - III. Approval of the minutes
 - IV. Any other business
- (A) I, II, III, IV
 - (B) II, III, I, IV
 - (C) III, I, II, IV
 - (D) III, I, IV, II
30. Which of the following is the MOST appropriate time, for correcting the minutes of a meeting?
- (A) Anytime the Secretary or Chairman detects an error
 - (B) At a meeting at which the minutes are presented but before they are adopted
 - (C) At the meeting at which the minutes are presented but only after they are adopted
 - (D) At a subsequent meeting following the adoption of the minutes

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31. Which of the following duties are performed by a secretary prior to meetings?
- I. Circulate minutes of last meeting
 - II. Arrange seating accommodation
 - III. Circulate notice and agenda
 - IV. Obtain Chairman's signature on minutes of last meeting
- (A) I only
(B) II and III only
(C) I, II and III only
(D) I, III and IV only
32. Two staff members and a consultant were invited to a management committee meeting to discuss a particular item on the agenda. Which of the following persons should receive copies of the minutes of this meeting?
- I. Members of the management committee who were present
 - II. Members of the management committee who were absent
 - III. The two staff members
 - IV. The consultant
- (A) I only
(B) I and II only
(C) I, II and III only
(D) I, II, III and IV
33. The Annual General Meeting for Info Tech Ltd is being planned. Which of the following MUST be circulated before this meeting?
- I. Notice of the meeting and agenda
 - II. Minutes of the last annual general meeting
 - III. Minutes of the regular meeting
 - IV. Copy of the firm's memoranda of association
- (A) I and II only
(B) II and III only
(C) II and IV only
(D) III and IV only
34. Which of the following is the MOST appropriate sequence to be used when writing a letter of application for a job?
- I. Qualifications
 - II. List of references
 - III. Interest in the position
 - IV. Request for an interview
- (A) I, II, III and IV
(B) II, IV, I and III
(C) III, I, II and IV
(D) III, I, IV and II
35. The document which outlines the details for a business trip for an executive is referred to as
- (A) a schedule
(B) a programme
(C) an itinerary
(D) a travelogue

36. Which of the following documents must a Caribbean citizen ALWAYS submit at a port of entry before he/she can enter into a foreign country?
- I. Passport or travel permit
 - II. Vaccination certificate
 - III. Visitors' visa
 - IV. Travellers cheques or bank draft
- (A) I only
(B) I and II only
(C) I, II and III only
(D) I, II, III and IV
37. Sweet Lime Bottling Company is ISO-certified. Which of the following is the correct meaning of the acronym ISO?
- (A) Information Service Organization
(B) Industrial Systems Operation
(C) International Organization for Standardization
(D) Internal Sales Office
38. Which of the following functions are performed by the Human Resource office?
- I. Preparing job cards
 - II. Shortlisting job applications
 - III. Preparing wages and salaries for staff
 - IV. Arranging training and providing welfare facilities for staff
- (A) I and IV only
(B) II and IV only
(C) I, II and III only
(D) II, III and IV only
39. Which of the following contributions is NOT a fringe benefit for employees?
- (A) Pension plan
(B) Training grant
(C) National insurance
(D) Medical insurance
40. An employee became ill while on holiday and will therefore be late in returning to work. Which of the following persons should the employee notify?
- (A) Office clerk
(B) Receptionist
(C) General Manager
(D) Human Resource Manager
41. A company receives an invoice for goods purchased on May 6, costing \$1 350. The terms written on the invoice are 2/10, N/30. If the invoice is paid on May 8 how much must be paid?
- (A) \$ 945
(B) \$1 215
(C) \$1 323
(D) \$1 350
42. The term "By Returns" and a corresponding credit of \$80 on a statement of account mean that a sum of \$80 was
- (A) paid to the seller
(B) paid to the buyer
(C) added to the amount owing
(D) deducted from the amount owing
43. Mr. Jones has an agreed credit limit of \$250 at Trendy Clothing Store. He submits an order for 5 school shirts each costing \$60 to the store. Which of the following actions should the store's credit clerk take?
- (A) Adjust the order and supply the goods.
(B) Show the order to the Credit Manager.
(C) Send a statement to the customer showing overdue amount.
(D) Return the order to the customer and request prior payment.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

Item 44 refers to the following information which was extracted from a statement of account.

Balance B/F \$60 (Dr)
March 2, Invoice \$150
March 4, Invoice \$78
March 20, Debit Note \$11.60

44. The amount outstanding on March 21 is
- (A) \$299.60
 - (B) \$276.40
 - (C) \$179.60
 - (D) \$156.40
45. What should Mr Jones do if his cash book and bank statement show a difference of \$20.00?
- (A) Reconcile his bank statement with his cash book.
 - (B) Regard the \$20.00 as interest on his current account.
 - (C) Inform the bank that an error has been made on his account.
 - (D) Write a cheque for \$20.00 to balance his statement with the bank.
46. The cancelled cheques that one receives with a bank statement are those cheques which
- (A) the bank dishonoured
 - (B) the bank exchanged for cash
 - (C) are more than 3 months old
 - (D) the account holder did not negotiate
47. Mr Parker is trying to prepare a bank reconciliation statement but is unable to complete it because a cheque paid to the utility company for \$60 is unaccounted for. In order to reconcile the bank statement with the cash book, the \$60 should be
- (A) added to the cash book balance
 - (B) deducted from the cash book balance
 - (C) added to the bank statement balance
 - (D) deducted from the bank statement balance
48. Which of the following would be the MOST economical purchase price?
- (A) \$20 per 50 kg CIF
 - (B) \$22 per 50 kg FOB
 - (C) \$24 per 50 kg less 5% trade discount
 - (D) \$24 per 50 kg less 10% cash discount
49. The Joy High School wants to build a new canteen. In order to select the most suitable firm for the job, the school should invite competing firms to submit
- (A) price lists
 - (B) catalogues
 - (C) statements
 - (D) tenders
50. Assuming a similar quality and quantity of goods and the same rate of insurance coverage, which of the following shipping terms will give the greatest benefit to a company purchasing goods?
- (A) F.O.B.
 - (B) C.I.F.
 - (C) Ex works
 - (D) E & OE

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

51. On the morning of April 20, the stock card for leather bags showed that the stock in hand was 650 bags. Later that day, 150 bags were received from the factory and 90 bags were sold. Which of the following would show the entries in the order that they would have been completed on the stock card on April 20?
- I. Issues 90, Balance 710
 - II. Receipts 150, Issues 90, Balance 710
 - III. Receipts 150, Balance 800
 - IV. Receipt 800, Issues 90, Balance 710
- (A) II only
 - (B) IV only
 - (C) I and II only
 - (D) I and III only
52. Which of the following activities are normally carried out by the sales department of a wholesale grocery?
- I. Preparation of invoices
 - II. Completion of order forms
 - III. Submission of purchase requisitions
 - IV. Preparation of credit notes
- (A) I and II only
 - (B) I and III only
 - (C) II and IV only
 - (D) II, III and IV only
53. Which of the following functions is NOT typically performed by a sales clerk?
- (A) Filing correspondence
 - (B) Despatching quotations
 - (C) Preparing the index of suppliers
 - (D) Dealing with telephone enquiries
54. Which of the following pieces of information should be used in preparing a sales quotation?
- (A) Terms, quantity, condition, goods available
 - (B) Price, goods available, delivery dates, terms
 - (C) Quantity, discounts, description, delivery dates
 - (D) Trade price, quality, catalogue no., method of delivery

Item 55 refers to the stock card shown below.

Stock Record				
Description: Broad paper		Supplier: Getfers Ltd.		
Stock Ref: 8/12		Max: 100 reams		
		Min: 20 reams		
Date	Order No.	In	Out	Balance
2012				
Jan 01				22
Jan 02	40/21	78		100
Jan 03	5c/8		14	86
Jan 04	BE/10		20	66
Jan 05	Tec/4		15	51
Jan 07	A/20		30	21
Jan 08	So/4		2	19
Jan 10	Ag/2		4	15

55. Which of the following is the date on which the stock clerk should have placed an order for paper?
- (A) Jan 05
(B) Jan 07
(C) Jan 08
(D) Jan 10

56. Which of the following documents originates from the carrier as a contract between the carrier and the supplier when goods are to be shipped?

- (A) Bill of lading
(B) Delivery note
(C) Despatch note
(D) Consignment note

57. Which of the following documents must be prepared when exporting goods by air?

- I. Airway bill
II. Bill of lading
III. Invoice
IV. Destination sheet
- (A) I and II only
(B) I and III only
(C) II and III only
(D) III and IV only

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

58. Which of the following actions does NOT represent corporate social responsibility?
- (A) Donating books to a school
 - (B) Sponsoring a local steel band
 - (C) Employing environmentally-friendly policies
 - (D) Distributing vouchers at a corporate function
59. Which of the following items usually appears first on a resumé?
- (A) Name
 - (B) Address
 - (C) Date of birth
 - (D) Telephone number
60. Which of the following is the MOST appropriate action to take if you are offered a job which you do not wish to accept?
- (A) Visit the human resource officer and apologize for not taking the job.
 - (B) Telephone the human resource officer, thank him/her and advise that you will not be taking the job.
 - (C) Write a letter thanking the human resource officer but declining the job offer.
 - (D) Decide that if the company does not hear from you, they will know you are not taking the job.

END OF TEST

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION**

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

SPECIMEN PAPER 01

KEY

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION**

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

SPECIMEN PAPER 2011

Item No.	Key
1	D
2	A
3	A
4	D
5	D
6	B
7	C
8	A
9	C
10	D
11	D
12	B
13	C
14	C
15	A
16	A
17	C
18	A
19	D
20	B
21	A
22	B
23	D
24	A
25	C
26	A
27	B
28	A
29	C
30	B

Item No.	Key
31	C
32	D
33	A
34	C
35	C
36	A
37	C
38	B
39	C
40	D
41	C
42	D
43	B
44	A
45	A
46	B
47	D
48	A
49	D
50	B
51	A
52	B
53	C
54	B
55	B
56	A
57	B
58	D
59	A
60	C



TEST CODE **01237020**

SPEC 2015/01237020

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

**C A R I B B E A N S E C O N D A R Y E D U C A T I O N C E R T I F I C A T E[®]
E X A M I N A T I O N**

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

SPECIMEN PAPER

Paper 02 – General Proficiency

2 hours

READ THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

1. This paper consists of SIX questions: THREE in SECTION I and THREE in SECTION II.
2. Answer ALL questions.
3. Write your answers in the spaces provided in this answer booklet.
4. Do NOT write in the margins.
5. You may use a silent, non-programmable calculator to answer questions.
6. If you need to rewrite any answer and there is not enough space to do so on the original page, you must use the extra lined page(s) provided at the back of this booklet. **Remember to draw a line through your original answer.**
7. **If you use the extra page(s) you MUST write the question number clearly in the box provided at the top of the extra page(s) and, where relevant, include the question part beside the answer.**

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.

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SECTION I

Answer ALL questions in this section.

1. (a) State TWO items of information that job applicants can obtain from the mission statement of an organization.

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(2 marks)

- (b) Businesses are expected to offer excellent customer service. Give TWO reasons why excellent customer service is important to every business.

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(2 marks)

- (c) Explain TWO reasons why it would **not** be wise to use the photocopying machine at your school to reproduce more than 500 copies of a program for graduation.

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(4 marks)

- (d) It is the aim of Caribbean countries to develop literacy skills in school leavers in order to ensure efficiency at the workplace.

Briefly describe TWO functions performed by EACH of the following clerks which require the use of literacy skills.

- (i) Human Resource Clerk

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(2 marks)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

(ii) Records Management Clerk

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(2 marks)

- (e) Sasha Rae operates a small but well patronized beauty parlour in town. Since the opening of a new housing scheme recently, her clientele has increased significantly. She is now considering the following factors: size, layout, and furniture, as they relate to the comfort, health and safety of her staff.

For EACH factor indicated above, identify ONE problem Sasha may experience as a result of the increase in her clientele.

Size

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Layout

.....

Furniture

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(3 marks)

Total 15 marks

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

2. (a) Elvis Jordon has been working as a bank teller for the past two years. He has been selected for promotion to a position at another branch and is required to present a portfolio at the interview.

List THREE items of information which he would need to include in his portfolio.

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(3 marks)

- (b) State TWO ways in which the receptionist can assist in maintaining a good interpersonal relationship between the organization and members of the public.

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(2 marks)

- (c) Your friend Dahlia wants to become a receptionist. Identify TWO attributes that she should possess to carry out the job effectively.

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(2 marks)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

- (d) Mid-Island Software Co. Ltd is a new computer firm which is located at 19 Palmer's Crescent, Castries, Saint Lucia. Recently, the firm advertised to fill a number of new positions, including the post of receptionist.

Mr Ram Webb of 10 Highway Drive, Castries, Saint Lucia has applied for the post of receptionist. Assume that you are Mrs Iris Field, assistant to the HR manager, draft a letter for the HR manager's signature to Mr Ram Webb, **in the space provided below**. Acknowledge his application and interest in employment at the company.

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(8 marks)

Total 15 marks

3. (a) Provide the meaning of any TWO of the following terms as they relate to business meetings:

Cancel

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Proposal

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Motion

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(2 marks)

- (b) State TWO functions of the treasurer of an organization.

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(2 marks)

- (c) Meetings usually follow the rules of Parliamentary Procedure, also known as Robert's Rules of Order, or norms for conducting meetings.

Study the items in Column 1 and rearrange any THREE of them in the order they would appear on a meeting agenda. Write your response in Column 2.

Column 1
Items
Other business
Apologies for absence
Chairman's report
Matters arising

Column 2
Order of appearance on agenda
(1)
(2)
(3)

(3 marks)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

- (d) Minutes of meetings are usually followed up with an action sheet.

Explain how the circulation of an action sheet could assist the chairman in ensuring a successful meeting.

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(2 marks)

- (e) Explain how business persons' knowledge of time zones can assist them in conducting meetings internationally.

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(2 marks)

- (f) The following is part of a bus schedule for the Mercedes Bus Company.

{Route 2 – Weekend Morning Service Saturday–Sunday Service starts at 8:00 a.m.} (1)				
{Santa Cruz Bus Station	8:00 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	11:00 a.m.} (2)
{Beadle's Boulevard	8:10	9:10	10:10	{11:10
Leeds Street	8:20	9:20	10:20	11:20
Park Mountain Drive	8:30	9:30	10:30	11:30
Longwood Road} (3)	8:40	9:40	10:40	11:40} (4)

Write an interpretation, in sentence form, of the bracketed parts labelled (1), (2), (3) and (4) on the bus schedule above.

(1)

.....

(2)

.....

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

(3)
.....

(4)
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(4 marks)

Total 15 marks

SECTION II

Answer ALL questions in this section.

4. (a) Actions taken by the Human Resource Department include carrying out disciplinary procedures.

Identify TWO reasons for which employees may face disciplinary procedures.

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(2 marks)

- (b) One of the statutory provisions for employee protection includes 'equality'. What does this law mean in relation to the employee?

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(2 marks)

- (c) Identify ONE compulsory deduction and ONE voluntary deduction that are taken from an employee's gross pay.

Compulsory:

Voluntary:

(2 marks)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

- (d) Use the following information to complete the crossed cheque provided below.

Crossing:	cheque to be paid only in the account of the payee
Drawee:	Bank of Surety, College Crescent, Mainland
Drawer:	Shirley Waite
Payee:	Joe Marj
Cheque No.	101; A/c No. 2468
Amount:	\$2 005.50
Date:	(Current)

Pay to

The sum of

.....

(9 marks)

Total 15 marks

5. (a) Identify TWO attributes that a clerk in the purchasing department should possess.

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(2 marks)

- (b) State TWO reasons why it is important to manage stock of all items used in a business.

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(2 marks)

- (c) A customer's bank statement shows an opening debit balance of \$500. Explain what this balance means in the customer's account.

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(2 marks)

- (d) On the stationery stock card provided on page 13, record the following information, to show the correct balance on 20 December 2014.

Name of stationery:	White Banker Envelopes
Item no:	10
Bin no:	7
Maximum level:	20 boxes
Minimum level:	8 boxes
Reorder level:	5 boxes
October 1:	Balance in stock 12 boxes
October 15:	Issued 5 boxes to HRM office, req. no. 2
November 5:	Purchased 13 boxes from Quality Stationery, Invoice no. 9
November 25:	Issued 6 boxes to admin. office, req. no. 4
December 10:	Issued 9 boxes to typing pool, req. no. 6
December 20:	Purchased 15 boxes from Quality Stationery, Invoice no. 11
The envelopes are stored in drawer no. 3.	

STATIONERY STOCK CARD							
Item name/number: White Banker Envelopes, 10				Maximum level:			
Stock location: Drawer #3				Minimum level:			
Bin number: 7				Reorder level:			
Date 2014	Receipts			Issues			Balance
	Quantity	Inv. No.	Supplier	Quantity	Req. No.	Department	

(9 marks)

Total 15 marks

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

6. (a) (i) List THREE duties of a marketing clerk.

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(3 marks)

- (ii) Identify THREE skills required by a sales clerk.

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(3 marks)

- (b) Barbados is a member of the International Organization for Standards (ISO). Green and Stewart Company Limited is a medium-sized business in Barbados.

Outline FIVE conditions that Green and Stewart Co. Ltd would have to maintain before it seeks to qualify as a member of the ISO.

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(5 marks)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

- (c) Ryan and Reid Co. Ltd failed to pay attention to the important details in coordinating its production activities and so did not make a profit.

Assume you are a member of staff in the operations department at this company. Recommend FOUR actions the company could take/enforce to create an environment of profitability.

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(4 marks)

Total 15 marks

END OF TEST

IF YOU FINISH BEFORE TIME IS CALLED, CHECK YOUR WORK ON THIS TEST.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

01237020/MS/SPEC 2015

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O N C I L

CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE®
EXAMINATION

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

SPECIMEN PAPER

Paper 02 - GENERAL PROFICIENCY

KEY & MARK SCHEME

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
1			
(a)	Information job applicants can obtain from a mission statement: - Main purpose of the organization - Activities of the business/what it does - Justification for the existence of organization - Who are their customers/who they strive to serve 1 mark for each correct response	2	
(b)	Importance of customer service: - Promotes success/professionalism of business - Influences customers' buying habits - Ensures customers' positive buying experience - Satisfies customers' wants/needs - Creates/enhances good customer relationship 1 mark for each correct response	2	
(c)	Reasons it would not be wise to use the photocopying machine at your school to reproduce more than 500 programmes for graduation: - Can be very expensive if print is done in colour - Not suitable for large-volume copying - Photocopiers at school may not be sophisticated enough to reproduce quality/professional programmes for graduation - It may be more economical to outsource firms for the job - Other equipment such as the computer/risograph would be more suitable to reproduce that quantity of programmes 2 marks each for full response; 1 mark each for partial response	4	

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
1 cont'd			
(d) (i)	Functions performed by the clerks requiring the use of literacy skills: Human Resource Clerk: - keeps accurate database of HR records - processes records, e.g. contracts of employment, medical/leave records - stores records in a systematic format - makes adequate preparation for interviews/suitable room/adequate furniture - short-lists applicants/invites short-listed applicants for interview - attends to staff welfare appropriately/refers employees with personal/work related problems to relevant persons for assistance/counseling - prepares leave roster/job letters for employees 1 mark each for any two correct responses		2
(ii)	Records Management Clerk: - maintains the storage and retrieval systems - demonstrates competence in preparing, classifying and indexing documents - prepares out cards/absent folder indicators for files out on loan - organizes records for filing using the various classifications - creates/drafts new files when required using the computer - manages the retention and disposal of records - locates and distributes files when needed - knows how to print and withdraw documents from the system 1 mark each for any two correct responses		2

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
1 cont'd			
(e)	Problems Sasha may face as a result of the increased clientele: Size: - lack of space/work stations to work comfortably and safely - poor ventilation - lack of easy access to amenities/supplies - increased likelihood of injuries/accidents Layout: - lack of space for proper arrangement of furniture so as not to block doors/exits - cluttered aisles and walkways - lack of space for adequate seating - inadequate lighting/room for re-arrangement/change Furniture: - limited access to furniture that are used regularly - inadequate supply of furniture to meet needs of the staff - inflexibility in the arrangement of office furniture - varying sizes of chairs/tables and other furniture may not be accommodated 1 mark each for correct response in each category		1 1 1
		8	7

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
2			
(a)	Items of information that would be needed in portfolio to take to the interview: - certification/proof of additional qualifications - character references - valid identification - letter of recommendation - evidence of outstanding performance/awards/innovations implemented 1 mark each for any three correct responses	3	
(b)	Ways the receptionist can maintain a good interpersonal relationship between the organization and members of the public: - Greet callers politely/professionally/by name - Provide timely/relevant information/pen to write in visitors' log - Answer telephone promptly - Respond appropriately to e-mail enquiries - Treat people courteously at all levels - Make visitors feel welcome - Make eye contact when speaking - Keep a smile/be pleasant at all times - Help visitors with individual needs/point out facilities - Deal with appointments promptly/check waiting time and remind persons they have come to see 1 mark each for any two correct responses	2	
(c)	Attributes that are needed to carry out the job of a receptionist effectively: - Personal appearance/deportment/good grooming - Smart/discreet/well-spoken/polite - Tact/patience/pleasant/helpful - Use of initiative - Good articulation - Good temperament/disposition 1 mark each for any two correct responses	2	

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
2 cont'd			
(d)	Draft letter of acknowledgement for signature: (1) Mid-Island Software Co. Ltd. 19 Palmer's Crescent Castries, St. Lucia (1) (Current date) (1) Mr. Ram Webb 10 Highway Drive Castries, St. Lucia (1) Dear Mr. Webb I hereby acknowledge receipt of your application for the post of receptionist at Mid-Island Software Co. Ltd. (1) We are in the process of reviewing all applications sent to our company and will certainly communicate with you within the next two weeks. (1) Thank you for the interest shown in employment with our company. Kind regards. (1) Yours sincerely/respectfully (1) _____ Mrs. Iris Field Award marks as follows: - Draft letter of acknowledgement (1) - Firm's address/return address in correct position (1) - Date in correct position according to style used (1) - Inside/applicant's address in correct position (1) - Matching salutation and complimentary close (1) - Acknowledging receipt of application for post of receptionist at co. (1) - Action/s taken by company (1) - Appropriate closing paragraph (1)		8
		7	8

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A										
3													
(a)	Meaning of terms as they relate to business meetings: Cancel: to revoke, annul, make void; announce that a planned event will not take place, for example, call off a meeting Proposal: a matter to be considered is made by individual attending the meeting Motion: formal step to introduce/propose a matter for consideration and decision by the group; a resolution that is proposed at a meeting 1 mark each for any two correct responses	2											
(b)	Functions that the treasurer of an organization would perform: - Takes responsibility/custody of all funds belonging to the organization - Prepares/maintains financial records showing breakdown of receipts, payments and cash balances - Makes payments upon the signature of the board/duly authorized person - Approves the payment of bills/banking/book-keeping - Financial planning/budgeting/reporting - Liaises with members about financial matters 1 mark each for any two correct responses	2											
(c)	Re-arranged items in the order they would appear on a meeting agenda: <u>Table 1</u> <table><tr><th>Items</th><th>Order of appearance on agenda</th></tr><tr><td>Other business</td><td>(1) Apologies for absence</td></tr><tr><td>Apologies for absence</td><td>(2) Matters arising</td></tr><tr><td>Chairman's report</td><td>(3) Chairman's report</td></tr><tr><td>Matters arising</td><td>(4) Other business</td></tr></table> 1 mark for each correct response	Items	Order of appearance on agenda	Other business	(1) Apologies for absence	Apologies for absence	(2) Matters arising	Chairman's report	(3) Chairman's report	Matters arising	(4) Other business	3	
Items	Order of appearance on agenda												
Other business	(1) Apologies for absence												
Apologies for absence	(2) Matters arising												
Chairman's report	(3) Chairman's report												
Matters arising	(4) Other business												

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
3 cont'd			
(d)	How circulation of an Action Sheet could assist the chairman in ensuring a successful meeting: - Persons are reminded of deadline to complete tasks - Action sheet contains the name of the organization, to whom the task is assigned, the objective, action item, when it is due, whether or not task is done and a comment column - Helps to achieve meeting's objectives - Ensures follow-up after the meeting 2 marks for correct full response; 1 mark for partial response		2
(e)	How business persons' knowledge of time zones can assist them in conducting meetings internationally: - Meetings/conferences/discussions can be held during normal working hours in each country in a timely manner - Travel times can be accurately calculated to ensure punctuality and full coverage of meetings - Knowledge of countries that are either ahead or behind universal time and therefore, would know working hours of business 2 marks for correct response; 1 mark for partial response		2
(f)	Interpretation of bracketed parts labeled 1-4 on bus schedule, in sentence form. 1) The Mercedes bus company travels along/plies Route 2 on weekend mornings, Saturday-Sunday, starting at 8:00.a.m. 2) The bus station is at Santa Cruz, from which the bus can be taken at 1-hour intervals, starting at 8:00 a.m. up to 11:00 a.m. 3) The street stops are at: Beadle's Boulevard, Leeds Street, Park Mountain Drive and Longwood Road 4) The bus will be at the various stops/places from 11:10 to 11:40 a.m. each weekend morning 1 mark for each correct response in sentence form		1 1 1 1
		7	8

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
4			
(a)	Reasons for which employees may face disciplinary procedures: - Frequent/habitual lateness - Irregularity/absenteeism - Inability to do the work required - Drug abuse/drunkenness on the job - Unacceptable behaviour/fighting - Theft/stealing from the organization - Violence/abuse/harassment of co-workers - Willful destruction of company's property 1 mark for each correct response	2	
(b)	'Equality' as a statutory provision for employee protection. What it means: - Legal rights should be observed despite ethnicity, gender, religion, national origin, colour, place of abode, sexual preferences and disability; there should be fair wages and equal pay and benefits for similar jobs being done 2 marks for correct response; 1 mark for partial response	2	
(c)	Compulsory and voluntary deductions that are taken from an employee's gross pay: <u>Compulsory:</u> - Income tax - National Insurance - Education/National Housing <u>Voluntary:</u> - Health/Life Insurance - Union dues - Credit union - Mortgage 1 mark for each correct response from the two categories	2	

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
4 cont'd	(d) Crossed Cheque: A/C Payee Only (Date) _____ Bank of Surety College Crescent Mainland Pay <i>Joe Marj</i> Two thousand and five dollars and 50 cents \$2 005.50 <i>Shirley Waite</i> 101 2468 Award marks as follows: - Used parallel lines for crossing = 1 mark - Inserted words in parallel lines = 1 mark - Appropriate date = 1 mark - Drawee/name/address of bank = 1 mark - Payee's name - Joe Marj = 1 mark - Correct amount in words and figures = 2 marks - Drawer's name - Shirley Waite = 1 mark - Serial/customer account numbers = 1 mark		9
		6	9

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
5			
(a)	Attributes of a clerk in the purchasing department: - Honesty - Initiative - Integrity - Detail-oriented - Confidentiality - Reliability - Dependability 1 mark for each correct response	2	
(b)	Reasons it is important to manage stock of all items used in a business: - prevention of pilferage/stealing - prevent spoils/obsolescence - signaling of market trends - to have on hand, stocks for customers/employees - availability of capital - to avoid excess stocks/overcrowding/cluttering of warehouse - to know when re-order point is reached - to control insurance costs if premium is based on average volume in stock over a period 1 mark for each correct response	2	
(c)	Interpretation of an opening debit balance of \$500.00 on a bank statement: - This is an overdraft as of the beginning of the month/previous balance 2 marks for correct response; 1 mark for partial response	2	

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Key: Question 5 (d):

STATIONERY STOCK CARD							
Item name/number: White banker Envelopes, 10				Maximum level: 20 boxes			
Stock location: Drawer no. 3				Minimum level: 8 boxes			
Bin number: 7				Re-order level: 5 boxes			
Date 2014	Receipts			Issues			Balance
	Quantity	Inv. No.	Supplier	Quantity	Req. No.	Department	
Oct. 1							12 boxes
Oct. 15				5 boxes	2	HRM Office	7 boxes
Nov. 5	13 boxes	9	Quality Stationery				20 boxes
Nov. 25				6 boxes	4	Admin. Office	14 boxes
Dec. 10				9 boxes	6	Typing pool	5 boxes
Dec. 20	15 boxes	11	Quality Stationery				20 boxes

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
5 cont'd			
(d)	Award marks as follows: - Maximum level/minimum level/re-order level = 1 mark - Correct dates (6) = 1 mark - Correct quantities for Receipts and Issues = 1 mark - Correct Invoice Nos. = 1 mark - Supplier: Quality stationery = 1 mark - Correct Requisition Nos. = 1 mark - Correct departments = 1 mark - Correct balance of 20 boxes on December 20 = 2 marks		9
		6	9

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
6			
(a)	(i) Duties of the marketing clerk: - Assists with preparing advertising material - Assists in the participating of sales promotion - Assists in budgeting for marketing activities - Liaises with media and advertising agencies - Liaises with the mailroom - Assists with preparing press releases - Makes travel arrangements for marketing purposes 1 mark for each correct response	3	
	(ii) Skills required of the sales clerk: - Computer skills • spreadsheets (excel) • Word processing • database - Literacy and numeracy - Interpersonal skills - Operates multimedia projector - Using the fax machine - Basic information technology skills - Using reference tools 1 mark for each correct response	3	
(b)	Conditions to maintain within the company before ISO can be considered: - High quality management systems - High quality of goods/services - Wastes and errors kept at a minimum - Safe environment for production and employees - High level of productivity - Cost of production controlled - Frequent internal audits - Production process open for continued improvement - Safe products guaranteed - Fair business practices conducted - Free and fair global trading practices - Trusted brand - Legal requirements for trading observed 1 mark for each correct response		5

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Paper 02 - General Proficiency

KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question		K/C	A
6 cont'd (c)	Actions the company could take/enforce to create an environment of profitability: - Plan the expected production levels - Act immediately on orders placed for goods - Ascertain the amount of raw materials for production - Order sufficient raw materials for production - Employ the number of persons to complete the job - Ensure equipment needed for the production process is serviced and ready for production - Secure the best quality material for the job - Provide safe working conditions for production workers - Plan realistic delivery schedules for goods - Meet all delivery deadlines set 1 mark for each correct response		4
		6	9



TEST CODE **01237032/SPEC**

FORM TP 01237032/SPEC 2011

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION**

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

SPECIMEN PAPER

Paper 032 – General Proficiency

1 ½ hours

In addition to the 1 ½ hours candidates are allowed 15 minutes to read through the paper. Writing MAY begin during this time.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

1. Candidates **MUST** use this answer booklet when responding to the questions. For **EACH** question, write your answer in the space indicated and return the answer booklet at the end of the examination.
2. Use the CASE to answer the questions.

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.

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01237032/SPEC 2011

THE CASE**Expansion of Home Furnishings Ltd**

Home Furnishings Ltd, a retail company that sells furniture and appliances, has its head office at 75 Bamboo Lane, Dominica, and is managed by Mrs Ann Taylor. The company has two subsidiary offices in Jamaica and St Lucia, managed by Mr Green and Mr Xavier respectively. Home Furnishings Ltd is seeking to expand and establish a new retail outlet in Barbados.

The company has scheduled a meeting of its divisional managers including those in the Jamaica and St Lucia offices to apprise them of the proposed expansion.

The meeting will be held on Monday, 24 January 2012 at 10:00 a.m., Eastern Caribbean time at the head office in Dominica.

All divisional managers are expected to attend the meeting. The time in Jamaica is one hour behind that of the Eastern Caribbean.

Answer ALL questions.

1. Assume that you are Mrs Penny Hoad, administrative assistant to Mrs Ann Taylor, at the head office in Dominica. Use the space provided to draft a MEMORANDUM which will be faxed to the divisional managers in Jamaica and St Lucia to inform them of the meeting in Dominica.

(6 marks)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

2. There are several ways to conduct a meeting with the staff in Dominica, St. Lucia and Jamaica, to eliminate travel to Dominica.

Advise the company of TWO of the **most** appropriate methods for communicating with the three locations simultaneously. Support your answer by indicating ONE advantage and ONE disadvantage of EACH method chosen.

[illegible]

(6 marks)

3. The management of Home Furnishings Ltd is concerned about the level of sales in each of its three locations. As a result, the head office is compiling a sales report for the period January to June 2011, to inform their decisions on the way forward. The sales figures in the three territories are given in the table below.

Sales ('000s)			
Country	Small Appliances	Furniture	Large Appliances
Dominica	150	50	300
St Lucia	200	100	250
Jamaica	400	75	500

- (a) On the grid below, draw a bar chart comparing the sales figures in the three countries, for inclusion in the report.



(8 marks)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

- (b) Identify ONE product line that should be reviewed before establishing the new retail outlet in Barbados. Give ONE reason for your choice.

(2 marks)

4. From the first meeting, a follow-up meeting has been scheduled for all the company managers to formulate strategies for the new office in Barbados. Sales levels for the first six months of 2011 for all three product lines will also be discussed.

Draft a NOTICE of the meeting and an AGENDA, for Mrs Taylor's signature, to be sent to all divisional managers. The meeting will be held on 15 February 2012 at 1:30 pm in the Hadden Hall Conference Room, Dominica.

[illegible]

(7 marks)

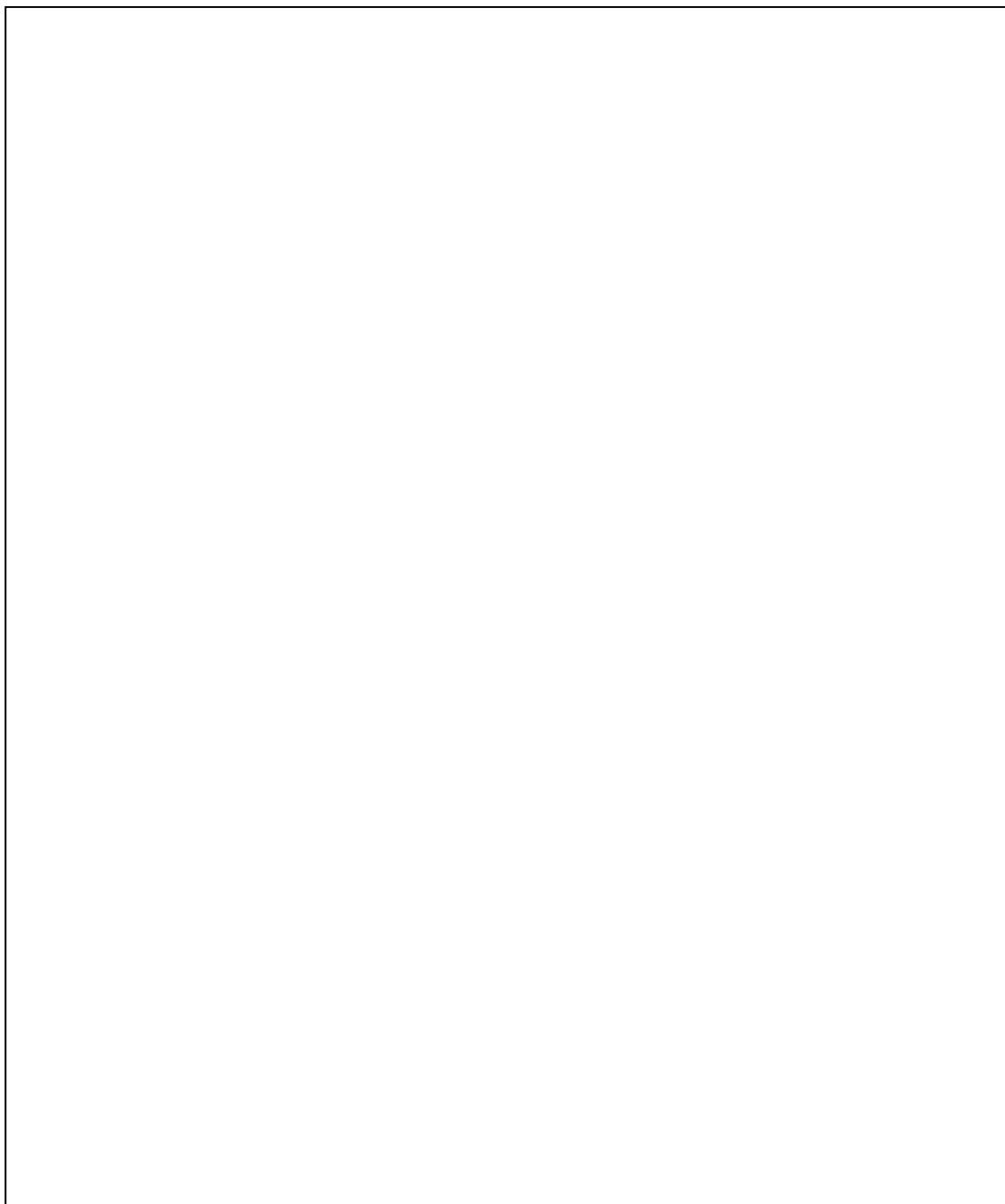
5. In preparation for the meeting scheduled for 15 February 2012, travel arrangements must be made. All travel activities are to be coordinated by the head office in Dominica. Use the space provided to make a checklist of FOUR activities that must be addressed to facilitate travel arrangements to Dominica for Mr Green and Mr Xavier.

(6 marks)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

6. Home Furnishings Ltd will require sales clerks for its retail outlet in Barbados. The starting salary is BDS \$1 500 a month and applicants are required to have five CSEC passes at the General Proficiency level including English Language, Mathematics and Office Administration. All applications must be received by electronic mail (e-mail) before 30 June 2012. Applications must be addressed to the Human Resource Manager and emailed to HRCarib@caribnet.com.

Draft an advertisement for the vacant posts.



(8 marks)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

7. Your friend Robin Patrice has seen the advertisement and is interested in applying for one of the sales positions. She has asked for your assistance in drafting a letter of application. Advise Robin on the essential elements that should be included in her letter of application.

[illegible]

(7 marks)

Total 50 marks

END OF TEST



01237032/K/MS/2011

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L
H E A D Q U A R T E R S

S E C O N D A R Y E D U C A T I O N C E R T I F I C A T E
E X A M I N A T I O N

O F F I C E A D M I N I S T R A T I O N

P A P E R 0 3 2 - G e n e r a l P r o f i c i e n c y

S P E C I M E N P A P E R

K E Y A N D M A R K S C H E M E

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
PAPER 032 - GENERAL PROFICIENCY
KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question	Key	A
1	MEMORANDUM TO: Mr Green Manager Jamaica Branch Mr Xavier Manager St Lucia Branch FROM: Mrs Penny Hoad, Administrative Assistant DATE: Current RE: Proposed Office Site - Barbados A meeting of all managers to discuss the subject as captioned will be held on Monday, 24 January 2012 at 1000 hours Eastern Caribbean time at the Head Office in Dominica. All divisional managers are required to attend. Further information will be forwarded to you in due course.	1 1 1 1 1 1

Section II: 1(d)(ii)

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
PAPER 032 – GENERAL PROFICIENCY
KEY AND MARK SCHEME

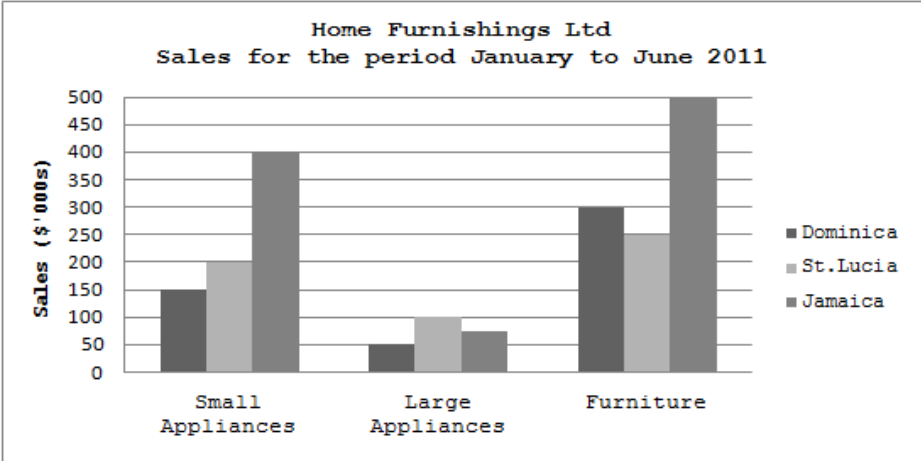
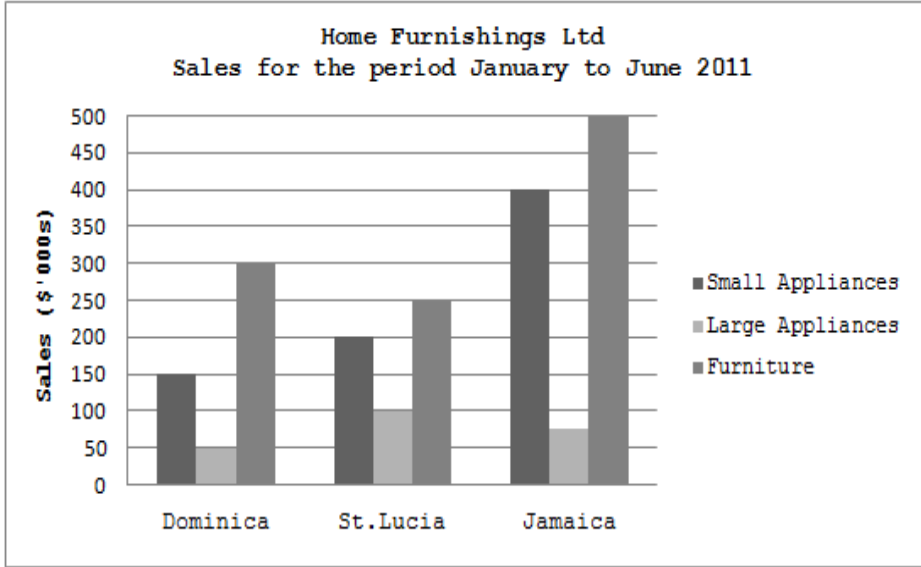
Question	Key	A
2	TELE-CONFERENCING Advantages: Saves on cost of travel Real time responses Can be done using company office/conference room/cafeteria Enhances/Promotes communication and coordination between and head office Flexibility in joining conference whenever necessary Disadvantages: Persons may constantly have to identify self No visibility Might be difficult to control depending on the size of staff Telephone problems/Technical failures Poses challenge when dealing with complex issues e.g. negotiation/bargaining issues ELECTRONIC INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATOR (eg: Outlook, MSN Messenger, Yahoo Messenger) Advantages: Formal/written Persons do not have to leave desk Real time responses Saves on cost of travel Saves on cost of paper Disadvantages: Less personal More prone to misinterpretation Not confidential	

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
PAPER 032 – GENERAL PROFICIENCY
KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question	Key	A
2 (cont'd)	VIDEO CONFERENCING Advantages: Visibility More personal Real time responses Identify with persons in other regions Disadvantages: May have to rent a facility for use May have to move physical location Costly to set up For any TWO appropriate methods - 1 mark each (2 x 1) For TWO advantages - 1 mark each (2 x 1) For TWO disadvantages - 1 mark each (2 x 1)	2 2 2

Section II: 1(c)(i)

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
PAPER 032 – GENERAL PROFICIENCY
KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question	Key	A
3a	Home Furnishings Ltd Sales for the period January to June 2011  OR Home Furnishings Ltd Sales for the period January to June 2011  Chart Title Bar Chart by either Product line or by Country Labelling x axis Labelling y axis Legend Plotting more than 6 values correctly (2 marks) Plotting 3-5 values correctly (1 mark)	1 1 1 1 2 2

Section II: 1(e) (i)

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
PAPER 032 – GENERAL PROFICIENCY
KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question	Key	A
3 (b)	Appropriate Product Identified (Large Appliances)	1
	Supporting Reason – Sales are significantly lower for the large appliances as compared with the other product lines	1

Section II: 1(e) (i)

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
PAPER 032 – GENERAL PROFICIENCY
KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question	Key	A
4	<u>NOTICE Heading</u> A meeting of all managers will be held on 15 February 2012 at Hadden Hall Conference Room, Dominica at 1330 hours. AGENDA 1. Opening Remarks / Prayer 2. Apologies for absence 3. Minutes of last meeting 4. Matters arising from minutes of last meeting 5. Manager's report re: Sales for January - June 2011 6. Formulation of strategies for new office in Barbados 7. Discussion of location and resources required 8. Any other business 9. Date and time of next meeting 10. Adjournment of meeting Date A. Taylor Manager <u>Mark Scheme</u> • Stated Heading • Date, time, venue and purpose • Agenda items presented in a logical format • Stated main item (to formulate strategies) to be discussed in meeting Agenda • Stated at least FOUR (4) items on Agenda • Dated document • Included blank space for name of signatory (Ann Taylor)	1 1 1 1 1 1 1

Section VI: 2(b)

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
PAPER 032 – GENERAL PROFICIENCY
KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question	Key	A
5	TRAVEL CHECKLIST ☐ Names of persons travelling ☐ Dates of travel ☐ Airline Arrangements / Reservations ☐ Hotel Accommodation ☐ Travel Documents ☐ Monetary Documents/Foreign currency ☐ Ground Transportation Heading (1 mark) Any four correct items on check list (1 mark x 4) Use of check box (1 mark)	1 4 1

Section VII: 1(a,d),4,5

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
PAPER 032 – GENERAL PROFICIENCY
KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question	Key	A
6	VACANCY HOME FURNISHINGS LTD Requires SALES CLERKS QUALIFICATIONS: CSEC General passes in : Five subjects including English Language Mathematics Office Administration SALARY: Bds\$1 500.00 monthly CLOSING DATE: 30 June 2012 All applications should be emailed to HRCarib@caribnet.com (1) (1) Attention: HR Manager HOME FURNISHINGS LTD 75 Bamboo Lane DOMINICA	1 1 1 1 1 2 1

Section VIII: 1(a)(i)

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
PAPER 032 - GENERAL PROFICIENCY
KEY AND MARK SCHEME

Question	Key	A
7	<u>Important elements to be included in the letter of application:</u> - A return address and date - An inside address to the Human Resource Manager - An appropriate salutation - Body of letter • Purpose of letter (Paragraph 1) • Brief personal data with reference to the resume attached • Request for interview and provision of contact information - Expression of appreciation for opportunity to apply and complimentary, professional close	1 1 1 3 1

Section III: 3(a) (ii)

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

JANUARY 2004

OFFICE PROCEDURES

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GENERAL COMMENTS

There was an increase in the candidate population for Office Procedures for the January sitting this year. Three papers were offered at the General Proficiency level:

Paper 1	-	Multiple Choice
Paper 2	-	Short Answer
Paper 3 / 2	-	Alternative to the School-Based Assessment

The examination was designed to ensure broad coverage of the syllabus with objectives chosen from all units.

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

In this paper the knowledge and application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and clerical routines was tested. Although the overall performance of the candidates was satisfactory, there was a marginal decline when compared with January 2003. The overall mean of the paper was 35.54. Marks ranged between 11 and 56 out of a maximum score of 60.

Paper 02 – Essay

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

In Section II there were four optional questions, which assessed the content in Units VII to X. Candidates were required to answer two questions from this section. The mean was 47.87. Scores were in the range 0 – 78 out of a maximum of 90.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to the School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This paper was designed to test the candidates' ability to draw from their personal experiences with routine office activities. These experiences may have been acquired through observation or from engaging in the tasks as an employee. Candidates were required to answer ten short essay-type questions based on a case study of a company called Millenium Petrochemicals.

The candidates' performance was generally much improved compared to previous examinations. The paper was based on the content of the Human Resource and Job Exploration units of the syllabus. The overall mean was 28.54 out of 50.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 - Essay

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

Question 1

In Part (a), candidates were required to list three ways in which a clerk could display good interpersonal skills when relating with supervisors. The performance was satisfactory but a few candidates misinterpreted the question by stating 'why good interpersonal relationships should exist between the clerk and the supervisor.' The responses indicated that candidates understood the importance of courtesy, attentive listening and seeking clarification in the workplace.

In Part (b), candidates were required to state four procedures that were necessary in the management of incoming mail. The performance was satisfactory except for a minority who wrote about outgoing mail and not incoming mail. Many responses were not in the sentence format.

In Part (c), candidates were required to write a memorandum to the Office Manager reporting an incident in which a clerk was hit on the head by falling ceiling tiles. The performance was highly satisfactory. There were instances where candidates wrote letters instead of using the memorandum format. In a few cases, the reasons for writing the memorandum were never made clear.

Question 2

In Part (a) (i), candidates were required to identify two items of information that would be found on a business card. The majority of candidates were able to provide information such as the position in the organization, contact numbers and the name of the company.

In Part (a) (ii), candidates had to name one piece of equipment and one item of supply, which are used in an electronic filing system. Some candidates were unable to differentiate between equipment and supply. Listing equipment such as the facsimile, printer or scanner and supply items such as pencils, stencils and diskettes would have allowed candidates to gain the required marks.

In Part (a) (iii), candidates were required to list three supplies that are used for the manual storage of paper records. Generally, this was done well by all the candidates.

In Part (b), candidates were required to apply their knowledge to assist in the selection of storage equipment for a new records management system. A checklist form was provided. Candidates had to indicate four factors and four benefits that should be considered when shopping for equipment. A guide was provided for the candidate. In some instances, candidates were unable to provide valid factors and benefits. Some of the desired responses can be seen in the table below.

Factors for consideration	Benefits
Confidentiality of records Ease of use of equipment Consideration of space	Security Easy access to records Fits in with layout of office

Question 3

In Part (a), candidates had to define three terms that relate to meetings and many candidates were unable to provide accurate definitions. The following responses would have allowed candidates to gain the required marks.

- i. Speaking through the chair – addressing the chairperson (only) when making contributions
- ii. Quorum – the minimum number of members required to be present before a meeting can take place or before a decision can be taken.
- iii. Casting vote – a second vote given to the chairperson to break a ‘tie’ of equal number of votes for and against a particular motion

In Part (b) (i), candidates had to give two reasons why a passport may be required for international travel outside of the Caribbean. In Part (b) (ii), they were required to list two documents other than a passport that may be required for international travel outside of the Caribbean. The performance on part (b) was satisfactory.

In Part (c) (i), candidates had to make arrangements for a meeting with Managers. The e-mail message from the General Manager listed information, which had to be used in the candidates’ responses. Candidates were also asked to identify three steps that should be taken when making the arrangements for the meeting. In Part (c) (ii), candidates were asked to write the notice for the meeting, which had to be sent to all Managers. Some candidates were unable to use the information given in the question to draft the notice.

The overall performance in this question was satisfactory. However, this is a critical area for entry-level personnel and more should be done to ensure that candidates are aware of all the relevant tasks in the organization of meetings.

Question 4

In Part (a), candidates were required to give the meaning of two terms that are relevant to the job recruitment process. The majority of the candidates provided responses that were correct.

In Part (b), candidates were asked to list details that should be considered when preparing for a job interview. Many candidates could not provide information about items to be considered 'before' the interview. Suggestions such as doing research about the organization and the advertised position, arranging transportation to ensure punctuality, preparing questions for the interviewer and rehearsing the proper mannerisms or responses with another person would have allowed candidates to gain the required marks.

In Part (c), candidates were required to complete an application form for the position of Receptionist at Communication Etc. Ltd. The majority of candidates were able to score full marks. Some candidates did not use the assumed name that was provided in the question but inserted information that may have been their personal details. Candidates must guard against this sort of mistake in an examination where anonymity is important.

Section II was made up of four optional questions and candidates were required to answer two.

Question 5

In Part (a) (i), candidates had to identify three functions of the Human Resource Office that are related to staff welfare. Some candidates did not identify functions that were specific to staff welfare. These could have included factors such as ensuring that the working conditions meet the legal requirements, providing staff benefits, social facilities and providing information about medical plans and pensions.

In Part (a) (ii), candidates were required to identify three instances when a company might administer disciplinary procedures to its employees. The majority of candidates earned full marks.

In Part (b), candidates were required to assume the role of a clerk in the Human Resource Office who noticed that important information was missing from the service record of an employee. The majority were able to state two ways in which the

information could be acquired. However, the issue of confidentiality with regard to accessing and storing the information was not adequately addressed. An employee's right to privacy should be ensured so the access to employees' records has to be controlled.

Question 6

In Part (a), candidates listed three precautions that an accounts clerk must take when writing cheques. The majority of the candidates earned full marks.

In Part (b), candidates were required to define three terms used in the accounts office. This segment of the question was difficult for most candidates.

In Part (c) (i), candidates were asked to use the form provided to enter the petty cash transactions. In Part (c) (ii), candidates had to calculate the total, balance the account, and record the balance at the end of the period. In Part (c) (iii), candidates were required to restore the imprest using cheque No. 281, which was received on January 1, 2004. Generally, the performance on this segment of the question was satisfactory. However, some candidates were unable to restore the imprest and follow the procedures requested in Part (iii) of the question.

Question 7

In Part (a) (i), candidates were required to list three departments of a large firm that should receive a copy of a Purchase Order. Candidates gave satisfactory responses to this part of the question. For Part (a) (ii), candidates had to explain how the copies of the Purchase Order would be used by each department. Some candidates could not explain why the copies had to be distributed. Information from the following list would have helped candidates to gain the required marks.

Accounts – to pay for the item

Purchasing – to verify price, quantities ordered, delivered and received

Production – to verify price, quantity and quality

In Part (b) (i), candidates were asked to complete the stores' requisition form provided. The majority of candidates earned full marks on this part of the question. However, some candidates did not interpret the instructions accurately and disregarded the Manager's role in approving all requests for supplies. They were required to leave the spaces for 'authorized by' and 'date' blank.

In Part (b) (ii), candidates had to describe three steps that should be taken after the stock requisition has been prepared, to ensure that the supplies are received by the Human Resource Department. Many candidates were unable to accurately identify these steps.

The following responses would have assisted candidates in acquiring the necessary marks

- obtain approval from the Manager
- send the requisition to stores
- make an enquiry if the item is out of stock
- contact the supplier for a quotation
- prepare a purchase requisition
- when the items are delivered the Purchasing Department must notify the Human Resource Department

Question 8

In Part (a) (i), candidates listed three tasks performed by a Sales Clerk when assisting with promotional activities. The majority of candidates received full marks. In Part (a) (ii), they had to identify three pieces of equipment that the Sales Clerk may use when performing promotional activities. The candidates' responses were satisfactory.

In Part (b) (i), candidates had to complete the invoice on the form provided, to reflect the sales transaction on the form provided. Many candidates were unable to complete the 'Gross invoice total', calculate the trade discount of 20 per cent, the 10 per cent VAT and compute the correct total with accuracy. In Parts (b) (ii) and (iii), candidates had to indicate how much would be expected to be paid if the debt was paid by February 1 and February 29 respectively. This segment of the question presented some difficulty to the majority of candidates who attempted this question. Inadequate mathematical skills deterred candidates from acquiring marks.

PAPER 3/2 General Proficiency

The Alternative to the School-Based Assessment

In order to answer the ten compulsory, short-response questions, candidates were required to read the stimulus material provided in the form of a case study on Millennium Petrochemicals Inc.

The Case

The case provided a profile of Wynn Tate, who completed her secondary education examinations with passes in six subjects. She showed interest in responding to an advertisement for a clerk in the Human Resource Department of a company called Milleneum Petrochemicals Inc. Miss Tate also identified the persons she wished to use as referees as she prepared for the application process.

Question 1

Candidates were required to list four functions of the Human Resource Office. Performance on this question was satisfactory.

Question 2

Candidates were required to identify three departments in the organization that would interact with the Human Resource Office. In addition, they had to explain the reasons for the interactions. Some candidates were unable to provide appropriate reasons for the interactions. These suggestions may be helpful:

Accounts – for staffing purposes, payment of bills and/or salaries

Purchasing – for the procurement of supplies

Sales – for staffing purposes

Question 3

Candidates were asked to list four skills that would be useful to a junior Human Resource clerk. Candidates provided very satisfactory performances.

Question 4

Candidates had to suggest three records that would be prepared by the Human Resource Office. Candidates gave satisfactory responses.

Question 5

In this question candidates were asked to identify three sources other than newspapers, that may be a source of information about job opportunities. Candidates gave satisfactory responses.

Question 6

In Part (a) of this question candidates were required to write an application letter in response to the notice of an advertised position. The majority of candidates earned close to the total marks on this segment of the question.

In Part (b), candidates had to complete the form provided to develop a Curriculum Vitae from the case for the applicant Wynn Tate. Many candidates did not use the information provided and opted to insert their personal information. This resulted in the scores being unsatisfactory.

Question 7

Candidates were asked to list four ways in which Wynn could prepare for the job interview. The majority of responses were satisfactory, which indicated that candidates were familiar with this section of the syllabus.

Question 8

Candidates were asked to suggest four factors that might have contributed to the low labour turnover rate at the company. The majority of responses indicated that candidates were unaware of the meaning of the term 'labour turnover'. The following suggestions would have assisted candidates in attaining higher scores:

- satisfactory salary
- healthy work environment
- fringe benefits
- positive labour relations
- absence of strikes and layoffs
- opportunities for promotions
- access to locations
- availability of technology

Question 9

In this question candidates were asked to draw a bar graph on the form provided, to show employment statistics. Many candidates did not attempt this question and in other instances, they displayed inadequate mathematical skills in the presentation and interpretation of data.

Question 10

Candidates were required to use the form provided to complete a performance appraisal. Candidates were unsure of the types of responses that would be appropriate measures of staff performance.

Comments for Teachers

Teachers should provide candidates with opportunities for:

1. Writing letters and memoranda;
2. Practice with the accounting exercises associated with the subject;
3. Practice in responding to a variety of questions from past papers and the item banks of subject teachers;
4. Engaging in practical activities that would facilitate the application of mathematical skills in routine office work.

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

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

MAY/JUNE 2004

OFFICE PROCEDURES

OFFICE PROCEDURES
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

JUNE 2004

GENERAL COMMENTS

Presently the CSEC examination in Office Procedures is offered at the General Proficiency level only in January and June of each calendar year. The subject continues to be popular with students of the Business subjects as evidenced by the increase in the population assessed this year. The examination consists of four papers: Paper 01 – Multiple Choice; Paper 02 – Short Answer Essay; Paper 03/1 – the School Based Assessment (SBA), and Paper 03/2 – the Alternative to the School Based Assessment.

A satisfactory number of the stated objectives represented all of the Units in the Syllabus in this examination. The responses from the candidates indicated that they were knowledgeable about each of the objectives tested.

The overall performance in the compulsory section of the examination was satisfactory. There were however some very good responses in both the compulsory and optional sections of the examination. The deficiencies that were seen will be addressed in this report in the detailed comments on the individual questions.

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

In this paper the knowledge and application of important facts, concepts, principles, processes and procedures involved in routine clerical and office activities were tested. Candidates performed very well on this paper with 64 per cent of them achieving Grades I – III an increase over 2003, when 61 per cent achieved the same.

Paper 02 – Essay

This paper consisted of two sections. Section 1 which was compulsory, was based on Units I – VI and Unit XII of the Syllabus. In this examination, candidates were required to answer all of the four questions. This candidate population is to be commended for responding to all of the questions.

Section II was optional and was based on Units VII – XI of the Syllabus. It was a test of the knowledge and procedures associated with specialised office activities and routines. Candidates were required to answer two of the four questions.

The performance of candidates on Paper 2 showed a significant decline compared to that of 2003 when 71 per cent of the candidates obtained Grades I – III. In 2004, 65 per cent achieved Grades I – III. Candidates' performance on the Application profile of this paper was generally satisfactory.

Paper 03 – School Based Assessment (SBA)

The School-Based Assessment of the examination was based on the Broad topic: **Managing the Human Resource Element in a Dynamic Work Environment**, and objectives were tested from Units VII and XII of the syllabus.

Candidates gave a highly satisfactory performance on this paper. Approximately 91 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I - III. This figure is comparable with 2003 when 90 per cent of the candidates achieved the same.

The candidates submitted responses of a high quality which indicated that the topic was within their competence. The candidates' creativity was evident in the variety seen in their responses.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to the School Based Assessment

Paper 03/2, the Alternative to the School Based Assessment (SBA) was a written examination, targeting candidates who would not have the facility of supervision as in a school environment. The objective of this paper was to test the candidates' ability to use their personal experiences of routine office activities acquired through observation, or from doing the practical office tasks assigned to them as employees in order to solve office-related problems. This paper consisted of ten essay type questions, based on a case study in an office environment.

The performance of candidates in this Alternative Paper showed a decline in 2004. Sixty-four per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I - III, compared with 79 per cent in 2003.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Essay

Section I comprised four compulsory questions.

Question 1

In this question, candidates were asked to describe two ways in which good interpersonal relationships in the workplace affect customers, co-workers and the business itself.

Some candidates did not respond about *good interpersonal relationships*, but answered in the negative stating instead the adverse effects of not having good interpersonal relations in the workplace. Based on the responses of those candidates who had the correct focus, identification of the benefits of good interpersonal relationships to the business was challenging for them. Their responses focussed on the benefits of good interpersonal relationships to the persons associated with the business and not the business itself.

In section (b) candidates were required to identify one type of operator-assisted telephone call. Most candidates were able to identify calls as *directory assistance*, *person-to-person*, *collect* and *conference*.

In section (c) candidates were required to draft the Chairman's Agenda using the details given in the question. Generally, candidates acknowledged that the document had to be headed with the name of the organization, and that the notice for the meeting should include the name, type of meeting, date, venue and time of the meeting. While most candidates were able to use the information given to itemize the agenda, a few candidates re-wrote the agenda items as a paragraph, exactly as was stated on the question paper.

Very few candidates demonstrated that the Chairman's agenda needed to have a separate column for notes, which is its main point of difference from other agendas.

Question 2

In section (a) of this question candidates were asked to list one advantage and one disadvantage of pre-paid and post-paid phone services. Generally they identified advantages such as the prepaid service enabled the user to limit spending whereas the postpaid service allowed for unlimited access in air time. The disadvantages identified were that the payments on post paid service could be exorbitant if not monitored whereas the prepaid service may not be available in an emergency due to lack of funds.

In section (b) candidates were required to briefly describe the postal services; Poste Restante, Recorded Delivery and Registered Mail. The responses indicated that most candidates had some

understanding of the services offered, however they were vague and in many cases suggested that there was not an in depth understanding of the objective that was tested.

In section (c) candidates were asked to arrange names in correct order for indexing and then arrange the same list in alphabetical order. There were a few good responses; however the majority were generally poor. Most candidates did not use the surname as the first indexing unit where the name included personal names. Some candidates seemed unclear about the term 'indexing order', so that the indexing order was incorrect but the alphabetical order was written with the correct indexing units. Some candidates did not know how to treat "The" and "&" in the names of Companies.

Question 3

In section (a) candidates were required to schedule appointments for an executive. The responses were satisfactory for the most part, although some candidates interpreted the question as having to manage visits to the organization.

In section (b) candidates' knowledge of the procedure to be followed with regard to the circulation of Minutes, after a meeting was tested. Generally, this section was done well as candidates acknowledged that the Minutes had to be drafted and that the Chairperson had to approve them. Further, they stated that a copy should be filed and that copies were to be sent to members. Some candidates ignored parts of the stimulus and listed instead the steps to be taken following a meeting, such as cleaning the room, putting away materials.

In section (i) of part (c) candidates were asked to list four methods of payment, which can be used by someone travelling to a foreign country. Although there was a variety of responses to this section, they were generally weak. In section (ii) therefore, the rationale given for the selection of the method of payment had no basis, if the candidate could not identify acceptable ways to pay for expenditure in a foreign country.

Question 4

In section (a) candidates were required to list different sources of information for job vacancies. This was done satisfactorily. A few candidates however listed the requirements needed to qualify for a job which were mainly academic qualifications and skills. In a few cases, candidates listed reasons for accepting a job, instead of the source from which one could obtain information about job opportunities.

In section (b) candidates' knowledge about the type of information that can be obtained from travel agencies was tested. The performance in this part of the question was satisfactory.

In section (c) candidates' ability to write a letter of acceptance for a job offer was tested. Some candidates performed fairly well, but many displayed poor letter-writing skills. Some of the candidates did not use the stimulus material given and included their personal information instead. Other weaknesses in the responses included non inclusion of the inside address, not addressing the Human Resource Manager, non-identification of the position being offered or applied for, errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and expression.

Section II was comprised of four optional questions.

Question 5

In section (a) candidates were required to list three reasons why the Human Resource office would conduct periodic interviews with employees. Some candidates failed to obtain marks for this part of the question because they referred instead to the job interview process. Those who earned marks mentioned reasons such as: to determine training needs, for updating employee records, the deployment of staff, and to get the employees' point of view about various issues in the organization. Some candidates seemed to have no knowledge of the content related to the objective that was tested and responded with irrelevant answers.

In section (b) candidates were asked to identify the reasons why a company may experience high labour turnover. Among the more popular responses were: low wages, unsatisfactory work conditions; limited opportunities for promotion; increase in workload with no support and the absence of mechanisation.

In section (c) candidates were provided with a form entitled Statement of Account on which they were required to record six given transactions. Most were able to complete the form with satisfactory results. A few errors were made in writing the name of the buyer. The responses of some candidates indicated that they did not have sufficient knowledge of the debit and credit entries, and were unable to access most of the marks awarded for this question.

Question 6

In section (a) candidates were asked to state the reason for having the notation *E & OE* on invoices. Most candidates gave satisfactory explanations which indicated that the notation allowed the vendor to reserve the right to make changes on the invoice if any errors were made on the part of the vendor with respect to the quantities or prices quoted on the order.

In section (b) candidates were asked to list the steps involved in the purchasing procedure. Most of the responses indicated the candidate had a satisfactory knowledge of this objective. Next, candidates had to complete transactions which had to be entered in a Cash Book. Most of the responses were satisfactory as they were entered in the appropriate columns, and the cash Book was balanced accurately.

Question 7

In part (a) of this question candidates were asked to suggest six reasons why it is necessary for a stock clerk to maintain accurate records in a large business. The most popular responses to this question were that accurate records are necessary to ascertain that sufficient stock was available, and to identify items that are overstocked in order to detect pilferage. Very few candidates were able to show a relationship between the need for accurate records and the company's policy regarding stock valuation, monitoring trends, profit analysis, budgeting or capital allocation.

In part (b) candidates were presented with four business cards from suppliers. They were required to classify the cards in the Index of Suppliers using firstly the name of the business and secondly the expertise or service offered. Most candidates were able to access the marks awarded for this part of the question. They were able to organise the index of suppliers using the names of the business. They were unable however, to organise the index according to the services offered. Also, some candidates wrote the name of the expert rather than the expertise or service offered. Very few candidates listed the names in alphabetical order, as is required in records management.

Question 8

In section (a) candidates' knowledge about procedures in the factory office was tested. They were asked to state the importance of having a list of tools, the Materials Report and the Operator's Job and Time Ticket in the production planning process. Generally the responses were vague and unsatisfactory. Candidates did not demonstrate in-depth knowledge of this objective of the syllabus.

In section (b) candidates were presented with a Time Card which they had to complete for an employee using the stimulus material given. The time sheet was completed satisfactorily by most candidates. However, the calculation of the hours worked and computation of the rate of pay, presented a challenge to several candidates. This was however the most popular question in this section.

Recommendations to Teachers

1. Incorporate simulation or role-play in teaching methods/activities to reinforce the principal concepts taught, in this way misconceptions would be easily detected based on the choices made by the candidates during the simulation.
2. Use a model office, to give students an opportunity to conduct routine office activities like filing, using an index, getting information from the telephone directory.
3. Expose candidates to information about the available services such as those in the banking sector, from other territories in the region.
4. Develop a glossary of terms for each unit in the syllabus to assist candidates with explanations, definitions and descriptions.
5. Students should be given projects and research assignments on *Job Exploration* which simulate the type of activities in which they will be engaged upon graduation from Secondary School.
6. Provide opportunities for the practice of formatting letters and responding to different types of letters, paying specific attention to grammar and spelling of words that are used often.
7. Candidates should have more practice with reading questions and identifying the content from which the response should come.
8. Develop written examples of model answers to assist students as they develop responses to different questions on the past papers.
9. Expose students to different types of forms used in business.
10. Engage in collaborative delivery of topics with other teachers of the business subjects and the language area.

School Based Assessment (SBA)

The broad topic was sub-divided into the following sub-topics. Candidates were also allowed to select their own topic derived from the broad topic assigned.

The sub-topics were:

1. Emerging Office Careers at the Entry Level
2. Equal Opportunities in the Office
3. Gender Issues in the Office
4. Re-Defining Roles in the Office
5. The Office – A Safe Place to Work
6. Coping With Change
7. Ergonomics in the Office
8. The Modern Challenges of the Job Search
9. Accountability for Performance in the Workplace
10. Rights and Responsibilities of the Office Worker

The list below shows the areas of the School-Based Assessment in which the candidates' performances were highly satisfactory.

- (i) Area of Investigation
- (ii) Scope of the Investigation
- (iii) Objectives of the Research
- (iv) Selection / Description of the Sample
- (v) Methods of Collecting Data

The main areas of weakness were the Review of the Literature and the Analysis of Data.

Recommendations to Teachers

1. Liaise with the Ministry / Board of Education to ensure that the topic being researched is the current one assigned by the Caribbean Examinations' Council.
2. Encourage group work, however, each student must submit an INDEPENDENT project.
3. Do NOT submit photocopied projects.
4. If problems are encountered during the exercise of supervising / guiding students, teachers should seek assistance from the Local Registrar or the local education department in a timely manner that would facilitate the submission of projects by the deadline date for the territory.
5. Insert the detailed Mark Scheme in EACH student's portfolio so that the CXC Moderators can follow the procedure used to award marks.
6. Do NOT award half marks.

Paper 03/2

The case detailed some of the feelings experienced by a secondary school graduate awaiting a job. On acquiring a position he learned quickly and soon began to seek promotion to a position in another department.

Generally, the candidate population responded favourably to Paper 03/2 and the overall performance was satisfactory. There were indications however, that some candidates had limited knowledge of the syllabus and more specifically, the functions of the Human Resource Department.

Question 1

Candidates were required to identify sources from which the school leaver in the case could obtain information about available positions. The responses were generally good and included newspapers, radio and television, the internet, unsolicited applications, and word of mouth. Most candidates were able to list more than one correct source in order to access the marks awarded for this question.

Question 2

In the first part of this question candidates were required to identify two reasonable expectations that employees may have of their supervisors. Generally the responses were satisfactory. Candidates expected their supervisors to be fair, to show respect to all employees, assist where necessary, and give unambiguous guidelines and directives. There were some responses however, that were vague and inappropriate and centred on the employer rather than the supervisor.

In the second part of this question candidates were asked to identify two responsibilities that employees have to their employers. The responses were satisfactory and were generally more appropriate than those given in the first section. Candidates expected employees to be respectful, trustworthy, productive and conscientious.

Question 3

In this question candidates' understanding of the type of issues considered before hiring someone for a vacant position was assessed. The responses were generally good. Some of the considerations were qualifications, skills, expertise, deportment, references and performance at the interview.

Question 4

In this question candidates' ability to organise a list of publications as they would appear in a bibliography was tested. This proved to be difficult for most candidates and the very poor responses are an indication that candidates lacked knowledge of the content and practice with this activity. Greater attention should be paid to this topic as this is a process which will be required for tertiary education and possibly while conducting research on the job. The majority of candidates copied the items as they were given. The few candidates who listed the names of the authors of each publication with the surnames first, did not arrange the items in alphabetical order and failed to use the format expected in the SBAs. Several candidates made no attempt to respond.

Question 5

Candidates were required to write a letter applying for the new position of Stock Clerk in the company PIECE BY MEANS LTD as if they were already employed as a General Clerk in the same organisation. This was generally well done although a few candidates displayed poor letter-writing skills and there were instances of poor spelling and grammar. Some candidates used inappropriate format and addressed the letter to the Managing Director rather than the Human Resources Director. A few candidates used the incorrect complimentary close for the salutation they gave.

Question 6

Candidates were required to identify methods by which they could obtain information on customers' feelings about the products manufactured by PIECE BY MEANS LTD. This question was done satisfactorily, which is an indication that candidates were familiar with techniques for gathering data. Among those listed were questionnaires, observations, telephone and face-to-face interviews, suggestion boxes, and meetings with sales representatives.

Question 7

The responses to this question were generally satisfactory as most candidates were able to present a graphical representation of the data gathered about customer satisfaction. However, some of the weaknesses displayed were the failure to give the graph a title, to label the X and Y axes and the failure to use appropriate intervals. A few candidates had difficulty in plotting the graph.

Question 8

Candidates who achieved high scores in this question presented good suggestions that could be used by an employee to prepare for promotion within a company. While many candidates outlined the factors considered by management for promoting an employee, some of the responses were inadequate. Among the appropriate responses were taking additional courses, participating in in-house workshops and seminars, and displaying an appropriate attitude on the job.

Question 9

In this question candidates made suggestions about the provisions that were made by the Human Resource Department that could account for the high level of satisfaction of the staff of PIECE BY MEANS LTD. Most of the candidates gave satisfactory responses, and cited adequate wages, health and safety measures, meaningful staff appraisals and opportunities for promotion, among others.

Question 10

In this question candidates were required to make recommendations to persons waiting to be employed. The responses showed candidates' creativity and were generally relevant and satisfactory. These suggestions included doing volunteer work, taking additional classes to enhance skills, registering with an employment agency, and following-up previous applications as well as sending out unsolicited applications.

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.

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

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

MAY/JUNE 2006

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

JUNE 2006

GENERAL COMMENTS

The syllabus in Office Administration was tested for the first time in the June 2006 examination and offered at the General Proficiency only. This syllabus replaced Office Procedures that was last tested in January 2006. The candidate population for this examination remained approximately the same as last years population for Office Procedures. Candidates' performance will be compared with the performance in Office Procedures in 2005. Candidates' responses reflected a wide range of abilities as evidenced in the distribution of scores. The examination consists of four papers:

Paper 01	-	Multiple Choice
Paper 02	-	Short Answer
Paper 03/1	-	School-Based Assessment (SBA)
Paper 03/2	-	Alternative to the School-Based Assessment

A satisfactory number of the stated objectives were tested from the various modules in this examination. The responses from the candidates indicated that they had some knowledge of each of the objectives tested.

The overall performance in the compulsory section of the examination was satisfactory. There were some very good responses in both the Compulsory and the Optional sections of the examination. The shortcomings observed will be addressed in this report in the detailed comments on individual questions.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

PAPER 01 - Multiple Choice

This paper tested the knowledge and application of important facts, concepts, principles, processes and procedures involved in routine clerical and office activities. Candidates' performance in this paper was satisfactory with 66.26 per cent of the population achieving Grades I - III. This figure represents a decrease of 8.21 per cent over that of 2005, when some 74.47 per cent achieved similar grades.

PAPER 02 - Essay

The format of this paper remained the same as the Office Procedures. The paper has two sections. Section I, which is compulsory, tests Modules I - VI and Module XII of the syllabus. Candidates are required to answer the four questions in this section.

Section II is the optional component of the paper. It tests Modules VII - XI of the syllabus. It assesses knowledge and procedures associated with specialised office activities and routines at the entry level. Candidates are required to answer two of the four questions.

The performance of the candidates on Paper 02 showed a marginal increase compared to that of 2005 when 71.87 per cent of the candidates obtained Grades I - III. In this examination, 75.21 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I - III. Candidates' performance on the Application Profile of this paper was generally satisfactory.

PAPER 03 - School-Based Assessment (SBA)

The School-Based Assessment of the Office Administration examination is a single guided research project designed to develop and enhance skills and competencies identified in the syllabus. The teachers and students were responsible for choosing the topics in this examination. Students worked progressively on their projects through the two years, with feedback from their teachers to ensure that timely submissions at each stage met the required standard for CXC.

Candidates performance on this paper was satisfactory. Approximately 92.15 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I - III. This figure is comparable with 2005 when 91.01 per cent of the candidates achieved the same grades.

The specimens submitted indicated that the candidates found the topics interesting and well within their competence to produce. The creativity emerging from this paper should be commended.

PAPER 03/2 - Alternative to the School-Based Assessment

Paper 03/2, the Alternative to the School-Based Assessment was a written examination, targeting candidates who would not have the facility of being supervised in a school environment. The objective of this paper was to test the candidates' ability to use their personal experiences of routine office activities acquired through observation or from doing the practical office tasks assigned to them as employees in order to solve office-related problems. This paper consisted of ten essay-type questions, based on a case study in an office environment. The paper tests the Application Profile only and is done in 1 1/2 hours.

Candidates' performance on this paper declined. The number of candidates achieving Grades I – III was 57.07 per cent compared with 66.23 per cent in 2005.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 - Essay

Section I comprised four compulsory questions, each worth 15 marks.

Question 1

In this question, part (a), candidates were required to identify two duties of both (i) a Clerk Typist and (ii) a Secretary in the Administrative Office. For the most part, candidates' responses were satisfactory while a few seemed unable to differentiate between the roles of the personnel identified. Filing and answering the telephone were two popular responses.

Part (b) tested knowledge of the functions of the office in a business organisation that support the production of goods and services. Some candidates related the response to the functions of the production department, rather than the functions of the office.

Part (c) tested candidates' ability to communicate information in writing and knowledge of centralisation of reprographic services within a company. To this end, candidates were asked to write a memorandum to the Office Administrator, providing justifications for or against the centralisation of reprographic services in the organisation.

Most candidates wrote a memorandum with the requisite presentation and information, but fell short by repeating the same rationale. Some candidates wrote a letter instead of a memorandum. Critical requirements such as date of the document, subject line, name and designation of the recipient and the sender were sometimes incomplete. Candidates continue to make the same and similar mistakes each year. Candidates' responses were generally satisfactory.

Question 2

This question tested candidates' understanding of:

- (i) Reference sources - trade journals
- (ii) The means of communication
- (iii) Time in the 24-hour clock

It was a compulsory question and was attempted by the majority of the candidates.

Part (a) of the question required candidates to list three types of information which can be found in trade journals. This posed great difficulty to the candidates. In most cases this section was not attempted and if attempted, the candidates who gave responses did so based on their general knowledge, but in most cases those responses were inadequate.

Part (b) of the question was well done and candidates were able to score full marks.

However, part (c) (i) posed great difficulty. Some candidates demonstrated weaknesses in changing the 12-hour clock to the 24-hour clock. This is an area of the syllabus that continues to pose a challenge to candidates. Candidates were unable to perform creditably on section (c) (ii) and (c) (iii). The candidates generally did not complete the column headed *Implications for contacting staff*, or gave a solution for contacting staff. The possible implications were:

- (i) Office closed – 4 hours
- (ii) Office not opened as yet – 1 hr and 30 minutes to opening time.
- (iii) Office closed – 40 minutes

Question 3

This was another compulsory question that was attempted by most candidates. It tested candidates' understanding of:

- (a)
 - (i) Information that an immigration officer can obtain from a passport
 - (ii) Documents that are required when applying for a visa to enter the United States of America
 - (iii) Services provided by travel agencies
- (b) Actions that should be taken in each of the following situations:
 - (i) A customer would like to gain access to his wife's personal chequing account
 - (ii) Your supervisor has asked you to inform a new employee about ways to safeguard confidential information
 - (iii) You have observed your co-worker leaking customer information to the media

Most candidates responded satisfactorily to parts (a) (i) and (ii) of the question. However, in part (a) (ii), some candidates gave responses such as "passport" and "birth certificate" although the passport would have served the purpose of certifying the bearer. Part (a) (iii) tested candidates' knowledge of two services provided by travel agencies. Some candidates were not able to differentiate between services provided and services facilitated by the travel agency. For example, some candidates gave "hotel accommodation" as a service provided by travel agencies. Still, others misinterpreted this part of the question by giving airline services rather than travel services.

Some candidates experienced difficulty in doing part (b) (i) of this question as they assumed that fraudulent behaviour was involved. However, many responses were carefully crafted which reflected higher level thinking skills. The second scenario also posed some difficulty for some candidates who either responded by repeating the question or stating that it was not their responsibility to safeguard confidential information. Generally, they acknowledged that they were to inform the new employee of safeguarding confidential information, but failed to detail the procedure for doing so. In the third situation, most candidates attempted this section satisfactorily, but some candidates indicated that rather than allowing their supervisor to deal with the situation, they would take matters into their own hands by either firing, calling the police or “knocking them off”.

Question 4

Question 4 was also compulsory. It tested candidates’ understanding of:

- (a) the use of a diary. (Receptionist)
- (b)
 - (i) The importance of the alphabetical filing system
 - (ii) Use of geographical filing
 - (iii) Use of numerical filing

Part (a) filing in an alphabetical system was a popular section and the responses of candidates indicated that they found the question interesting. Most candidates were able to obtain some mark for this section, by listing *for appointments, making notes*.

Part (c) of the question appeared to pose the most challenge to candidates, as the responses were superficial or not attempted.

Most candidates were able to obtain 4 of the 8 marks awarded for the section. Responses were satisfactory.

Question 5

Although an optional question, the number of responses marked were 6500 making it the most popular option. This question tested candidates’ understanding of the benefits of legislation related to workers’ welfare, as well as the factors that contribute to employee turnover in an organisation. Candidates were also tested on their understanding of the preparation of the petty cash book.

Part (a) (i) of the question was done satisfactorily. The weaker candidates did not demonstrate a clear understanding of the benefits that can be derived by the employer for issuing protective clothing and gear to the employees.

Part (a) (ii) was also done satisfactorily. The weaker candidates tended to give the answer to (a) (i) here.

Part (a) (iii) was well done. The weaker candidates did not demonstrate a clear understanding of the term “turn-over”.

Part (b) was the most popular part of the question. Here candidates were required to record five items in the most appropriate analysis columns on the form provided.

The majority of candidates were able to post 4 of the 6 items correctly, using the appropriate date and details. They were able to compute the grand total and also totals for the individual analysis columns correctly.

The weaker candidates demonstrated problems in balancing and restoring the imprest as required. They were unable to match the correct details for the balance carried down and brought down and the imprest. The balance brought down and the imprest in most cases were not shown on the correct side of the petty cash (left hand side).

Overall, the majority of candidates were awarded marks in the range 6 - 11.

Question 6

This question was also quite popular. It was designed to test the candidates' understanding of:

- (a) The ways in which the particular equipment (computer) can be used to increase the efficiency of the sales department.
- (b) The similarity and differences between debit and credit cards.
- (c) The advantages and disadvantages of answering machines which are programmed to operate without manual assistance.

This question was attempted by more than 4 000 candidates.

For part (c) most candidates were able to state three ways in which the computer can be used in the sales department, though the structure of the responses needed improvement. Candidates were however, able to demonstrate that they had adequate knowledge of the functions of the computer and were thus able to obtain at least 1 of the 3 marks awarded.

The concepts of debit and credit cards need to be emphasised as they are popular methods of transacting in the exchange of goods and services. Whereas most candidates were aware that they referred to payments, the responses ranged from the functions of debit notes and credit notes, to sales on credit, and making deposits as credits, and withdrawals as debits. Responses included reference to the physical material of which the cards were made. Marks obtained for this section were poor.

Many candidates who opted for this question were able to answer part (c) quite well. The majority was able to list five advantages of using the answering machine. Most found 3 correct disadvantages; others were able to list at least one disadvantage. However, most looked at the disadvantages as being linked to the employee and not the organisation. Candidates were able to score quite well in this section of the question. The mark awarded for grammar and spelling eluded most candidates.

Question 7

This was another optional question, though not popular among candidates. The question was designed to test candidates' understanding of:

- (a) The meanings of the terms "Free on Board", "Ex Works" and "Cost, Insurance and Freight" as used in trading documents.
- (b) Drafting a Press Release, to attract the attention of potential buyers based on a given situation.

The majority of candidates had difficulty explaining in part (a) what was meant by the trading terms. Many related the terms to the workers in the company. For example, *ex works* was *an employee who no longer worked with the organisation*. The paucity of the responses were reflected in the marks which though ranging between 0 - 6, were clustered at 0 - 3. It appeared that there was some understanding of what the terms meant, but there was an inability to be explicit.

Part (b) required candidates to write a press release from information given to them in the stimulus material. The presentation from the majority of candidates showed that they did not know the format of how a press release should be written. However, because they were able to interpret the information, they were able to obtain some marks.

Question 8

This question required candidates to (a) list three tasks which a clerk in the factory office would be expected to perform in the preparation of a shift roster for the staff; (b) identify three benefits of the interaction between the sales office and the dispatch and transport office and (c) use the information from a planning master to complete a cost card provided.

This question was a very popular option and many candidates attempted it. Most candidates did fairly well and the scores ranged between 8 - 11.

Most candidates were able to complete the form accurately but the weaker candidates were unable to compute the costs accurately and were unsure of the costs to include in the total cost. Parts (a) and (b) were for the most part very poorly done. Many candidates did not attempt these sections. Many of those who answered these sections gave incorrect responses. Some candidates listed three functions of a clerk in the factory office for part (a) and functions of the dispatch and transport office for part (b).

Candidates need more practice in answering questions which require more than recall. They need to apply their knowledge to situations. Using case studies in the classroom can assist students in developing analytical skills.

Recommendation to Teachers

1. Team teaching can be encouraged so that the Accounts teacher and Office Administration teacher can work more closely together in finding the right approach to use, to present concepts.
2. Candidates need more practice in the preparation of the petty cash form. Emphasis should be placed on the correct steps to take when balancing.
3. Resource persons can be brought in to speak to students on the legislation related to workers' welfare. Emphasis must be placed on the benefits that can be derived by both the employer and the employee in the workplace.
4. More practice exercises and simulations, to reinforce teaching points.
5. The integrated approach to teaching should be employed in teaching various aspects of the syllabus.
6. Refrain from one-word responses.
7. Invite resource persons to address students.
8. Familiarise students with the taxonomy as outlined in the syllabus.
9. Assessment – self, peer, and teacher should be done to reinforce acceptable standards.

PAPER 03 - School-Based Assessment (SBA)

The School-Based Assessment for the Office Administration Examination of 2005 - 2006 applied a new approach in the conduct of the school-based assignment. The strategy is designed to enable candidates to acquire and enhance critical skills by working on projects that they consider more worthwhile and within their capability, but which are part of the learning activities outlined in the Modules of the syllabus. Candidates, with the guidance and approval of the teacher, were allowed to select their own topics derived from objectives in the syllabus. Among those submitted were.

1. Transformation from a Manual to an Electronic Filing System
2. Principles of Records Management
3. Equipment used in Records Management
4. The Role of the Human Resource Department as a Competent Source in an Organisation
5. Investigating the Daily Operations of the Purchasing Department of a Bank
6. An Investigation into the Recruitment of Workers in the Human Resource Department of the National Commercial Bank
7. An Investigation into the Marketing Methods of the Sales Department of Courts Ltd. With Regard to Marketing and Publicizing of their Products and Services

The more popular headings generated by candidates were as follows:

- Transformation from a Manual to an Electronic Filing System
- Equipment used in Records Management
- Emerging Office Careers and Applicable Attitudes
- Role of the Office in an Information-Driven Society
- Centralization versus Decentralization of Office Activities, and
- Principles of Records Management.

The least popular topic selected was “Preserving and Retaining Records and Associated Legal Stipulations”.

The type of study conducted by candidates was mainly field-based research and incorporated mainly features of the qualitative design. A few candidates did research which could be classified as library-based research.

The Caribbean Examinations Council provided a detailed Mark Scheme, which outlined the tasks, criteria and marks for each section. The total score for the research project was 50 and contributed to 25% of the final marks. Marks were awarded only to the **Application** Profile.

For the most part, the level of research conducted was satisfactory. Candidates scored marks ranging from a low of 10 to the maximum of 47. Those candidates who scored low marks were mainly those who did not comply with the requirements of the new Office Administration syllabus, using instead the Office Procedures guidelines for completing the SBA project. Where candidates were familiar with the new Mark Scheme and where they heeded the step-by-step suggestions of their teachers, they demonstrated an acceptable level of research skills, coupled with neatly presented folders that were almost error-free, with appropriate graphics and creative in their designs. An attempt was made to stick to the 1 000 - 1 200 word limit. Teachers are reminded to use the Mark Scheme provided by CXC. It should be attached to EACH candidate’s project as it facilitates the moderation process, besides indicating how the marks are allocated to the tasks. On no occasion should fractional marks (1/4 or 1/2) be awarded.

Some candidates demonstrated weakness in presenting the three kinds of information sources, i.e. for persons list, publications lists and internet sites lists. A sample is outlined below:

LIST OF INFORMATION SOURCES:

1. For persons list:

Date	Place interviewed	Job title
May 01, 2006	Canewood, TVU	Chief Executive Officer
May 02, 2006	St. Bess High School	Administrative Assistant

2. Publications list: (one author)

Ellis, A. K. (2005). *Research on educational innovations* (4th ed.). New York: Eye On Education, Inc.

(2 or more authors)

Harry, F., Forde, G., Tucker, C. (2004). *Writing letters*. San Fernando: MacPhee Publishers Limited.

Scholoss, P. J., Smith, M. A., & Scholoss, C. N. (2001). *Instructional methods for secondary students with learning and behaviour problems*. Needham Heights, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

3. Internet sites list:

Duffrin, E. (1996, Sept.). *Direct instruction making waves*. Retrieved May 5, 2006, from <http://www.catalyst-chicago.org.arch/09-96/096main.htm>.

Careful attention must be paid to the wording of titles for the research project, the aims/objectives and the methodology employed. Candidates should ensure that the methodology includes a description of the sample, instruments and rationale. At least one of the business forms used should be properly completed and inserted in the Appendix section. The entire project should be error-free, that means, all effort should be made to proofread for spelling, grammar, punctuation and presentation/formatting errors.

The Table of Contents were in some instances incomplete, as some candidates failed to indicate the page number as well as to number the pages of the project to match the way it is specified in the Table of Contents. In numbering the Table of Contents, for example, if “Regulations and Policies” occupies two pages, it should **not** be written 10 - 11, but only to indicate the page on which it starts, followed by whatever page numbering for subsequent content.

The instruments used for collecting information, such as the questionnaire, should include some instructions to the respondents with regard to what they are required to do. Anonymity and confidentiality should be maintained throughout the process. Too often, only the name of the data collecting instrument and the questions are presented.

Recommendation to Teachers

It is important for schools and territories to share best practices through workshops, seminars and exhibitions as well as to utilise a variety of resource texts, and make good use of electronic and other means to ensure that a high standard of work is maintained at the secondary level.

PAPER 03/2 - Alternative to the School-Based Assessment

Question 1

This question required that candidates list three traits an employer should possess that would demonstrate a positive relationship with his employees. It was worth 3 marks. Most candidates responded satisfactorily, giving at least two correct traits, while others did not demonstrate an understanding of the term. Some candidates, on the other hand, misinterpreted “traits” for “skills” and therefore scored minimal marks.

Question 2

For this question, candidates were asked to list two ways in which a “positive” culture is demonstrated in the workplace among employees. It was worth 2 marks. Most candidates gave appropriate responses such as “supportive of each other” or “team effort” and so were able to score satisfactorily. Unfamiliarity with the jargon of the subject appeared to be a shortcoming.

Question 3

Candidates were asked to state four ergonomic changes that the employer in the case cited, could have made in the workplace to enhance it. It was worth 4 marks. Many candidates misinterpreted “ergonomic changes” and gave responses relating to “change” in general, for example, “change in work conditions”. Factors like lighting, ventilation, colour schemes and design of furniture to meet the needs of its users would have comprised more appropriate responses in this instance, but few candidates were able to zero in on the specific requirements.

Question 4

Candidates were required to state three reasons for employees’ loyalty being necessary, particularly among the staff in the Sales and Marketing Department. It was worth 3 marks. Responses like, “employees are responsible for selling and advertising the company’s goods and services, thus securing continuous employment for workers”, as well as, “to improve the firm’s image”, were given by many candidates. Some candidates, however, were challenged in articulating appropriate responses specifically relating to the staff in the Sales and Marketing Department and making linkages of relationships that would be fostered with external customers and their impact. Poor grammar and spelling sometimes made it difficult to determine what the candidate actually wanted to describe.

Question 5

For this question, candidates were required to list four pieces of modern technology that are used by an employee in the sales department on a daily basis. It was worth 4 marks. Most candidates were able to give satisfactory responses such as computers, photocopiers, fax machines and printers, thus displaying their familiarity with the concept of modern technology. A few candidates listed items such as paper clips in their responses.

Question 6

Candidates were required to list three skills and three attributes that are necessary in conducting a needs analysis for employees in the human resource department. It was worth 6 marks. Some candidates had difficulty in differentiating between factors that could be described as “skills” and “attributes”. Many candidates, on the other hand, gave specific, appropriate examples relating to the case study.

Question 7

This question asked candidates to formulate questions for a needs analysis. It was hoped that a similar technique as utilised in the school-based assessment data-gathering component, would be employed in structuring questions for the needs analysis. Whereas most candidates did write questions, most of them had no link to the objective.

Question 8

This question required candidates to prepare a notice to all staff to inform them of a workshop on “change” with instruction as to the venue, time, guest speaker, duration and all other pertinent information. It was worth 6 marks. Most candidates scored well on this question, demonstrating that they had clear knowledge and understanding of the essential competencies.

Question 9

Candidates were required to write a letter. This area continues to be one that necessitates development, as the letter, in whatever medium, remains an essential business tool. Though candidates were given all the necessary information to formulate the letter, there were significant shortcomings in presentation and technique.

Question 10

Part (a) asked candidates to identify skills acquired as a clerk, that would be utilised in a new position at a higher level. Candidates’ responses indicated that they were unable to make the connection.

Part (b) presented candidates with the challenge of having a clerk in the human resource department assist the manager who would be conducting a workshop. This question asked that candidates distinguish the role of the clerk in the HR office from the role of the manager and how the clerk could support the functions of the manager. Some candidates responded as the clerk actually conducting the seminar.

Recommendation to Teachers

1. Students should be given adequate practice in answering questions from case studies.
2. Past papers are a good source of practice.
3. Students should be encouraged to use the jargon of the subject. They must be made aware of the modern terminologies being used for various areas of activities applicable to office administration.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
JANUARY 2007**

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

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OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
JANUARY 2007

GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates' performance in the January 2007 sitting was encouraging. There was an improvement in performance over that of previous years. More specific comments will be addressed separately under each paper. 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.

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Candidates' performance in this paper declined slightly over the performance in previous January sittings. The overall mean of the paper in the 2007 examination was 36.46, compared with 38.43 and 39.42 for January 2006 and 2005 respectively. Marks ranged from 0 to 54 out of a maximum of 60.

Paper 02 – Short Answer

This paper consisted of two sections. Section I comprised four compulsory questions based on Modules I, II, III, IV, V, VI and XII, and Section II which consisted of four optional questions based on Modules VII, VIII, IX, XI. Candidates were required to answer two questions from Section II. Knowledge and the application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and office routines were tested. Candidates performance on this paper improved slightly compared with that of January 2006. The overall mean for this Paper was 42.08 compared with 38.49 in 2006. Marks ranged from 2 to 80 out of a maximum of 90.

A general observation on candidates' performance determined that new aspects of the syllabus that were tested, challenged candidates and affected their overall performance. Some instances were the term 'ergonomic considerations' in Question 1, a comparative graph in question 2, 'copyrighted material' in question 3 and terminology used in meetings in question 4. In Section II, the terms 'job description and job specification' in Question 5, and the notice of tender in question 7 were not favourably addressed.

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 not have had 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 structured questions based on an office case. For this examination the case focused on Modules I, II, and XII of the syllabus.

Candidates' performance in this paper continued to improve in some areas over that of previous examinations. It is noted, however, that some areas continue to challenge candidates and affect their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 26.04 out of a maximum of 50. When this is compared with the 2006 paper which had a mean of 28.50 a slight decline is evident. Marks ranged from 3 to 47 out of a maximum of 50.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Short Answer

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

Question 1

This question tested Module I (Objectives 3 and 5) and Module IV (Objective 1).

For Part (a), candidates were required to list three basic skills that are required for entry-level positions in the current job market. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were required to state four ways in which a receptionist can contribute to the goodwill of an organisation. This was worth 4 marks. The majority of candidates were able to provide correct responses for Parts (a) and (b).

In Part (c), candidates were to provide four ergonomic considerations and briefly explain how each contributes to the employees' satisfactory working environment. This was worth 8 marks. The majority of candidates were challenged by the term 'ergonomics'. In many instances references were made to 'staff welfare'. Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 5.20.

Question 2

This question tested Module II (Objectives 2 and 3).

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to list four factors that would determine the medium used to communicate with business associates. This was worth 4 marks.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were asked to identify three of the most economical means of communicating with the branches of the company. This was worth 3 marks.

These two parts of this question were well done.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were provided with a set of comparative statistics. They were required to draw a comparative graph to represent the statistical data provided. This was worth 6 marks. Most candidates were unable to correctly represent data on the graph.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were to indicate the grade that reflects the most similar performance for the two years. This was worth 2 marks. The majority of candidates responded satisfactorily on this part of the question. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 5.86.

Question 3

This question tested Module XII (Objective 2) and Module III (Objectives 2 and 4).

For Part (a), candidates were to list three factors which a person should consider when seeking employment. This was worth 3 marks. The majority of candidates provided correct responses.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were to state two advantages of numerical filing systems. This was worth 2 marks. The majority of candidates earned full marks.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were to state two advantages of electronic filing systems. This was worth 2 marks. This part of the questions challenged many students.

For Part (c), candidates were required to draft a memorandum from the Human Resource Manager, informing all staff that management has agreed to enforce copyright legal stipulations throughout the organization. In Part (i) of the question, candidates were to refer to how the policy will affect the writer of the copyrighted material; and in Part (ii) they were to indicate the impact on the photocopying and general costs of the organization. This was worth 8 marks.

The performance on this part of the question was unsatisfactory as the majority of candidates neglected to provide an appropriate memorandum format, and to indicate the information as guided in the question. It is apparent that the majority of candidates were unfamiliar with the requirements of the Copyright Act in their respective territories. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 7.31.

Question 4

This question tested Module IV (Objectives 1 and 3) and Module V (Objectives 1 and 3).

For Part (a), candidates were to list three pieces of equipment that may be required by a presenter at a meeting. This was worth 3 marks. Many candidates were unable to differentiate between 'supplies' and 'equipment'.

For Part (b), candidates were asked to define four terms as they are used in meetings. This was worth 4 marks. Many candidates were unable to provide correct definitions for meeting terminology.

In Part (c), candidates were required to make diary entries for a manager. Many responses did not indicate correct timing for post-lunch activities. This was worth 5 marks.

Part (d) of this question asked candidates to prepare an e-mail to make a hotel reservation for single occupancy. While many candidates were able to word the e-mail message, they showed weaknesses in its layout and the relevant information. This was worth 3 marks.

The overall performance in this question was satisfactory. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 3.06.

Section II – Optional Questions

Question 5

This question tested Module VII (Objective 4) and Module VIII (Objective 5).

For Part (a), candidates were to assume the position of a human resource clerk who discovers that an employee's record shows that he is HIV-positive. Candidates were to state in Part (a) (i), the HR clerk's obligation to the organisation, and in Part (ii), obligation to the employee. This was worth 4 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were to define the terms 'job description' and 'job specification'. The majority of candidates earned full marks, while others were unable to differentiate between the two terms. This was worth 2 marks.

In Part (c) (i), candidates were required to use an electronic transfer form to make a payment. This was worth 7 marks. The majority of candidates were able to secure close to maximum marks.

In Part (ii), candidates were to list two advantages of using the electronic transfer form to make a payment. This was worth 2 marks. This part of the question was answered well. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 9.64.

Question 6

This question tested Module VIII (Objectives 3 and 4) and Module IX (Objective 2).

For Part (a) candidates were to identify one situation in which 'credit note', 'debit note' and 'statement of account' will be issued by a wholesale company. This was worth 3 marks. Some candidates were unsure of the differences between the credit and debit notes. In addition, the statement of account was defined as the bank statement.

For Part (b) candidates were to list three ways in which the facsimile machine contributed to efficiency in business. This segment of the question presented little difficulty to most candidates. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c), candidates were provided with a list of companies, their addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. Candidates were to use the listing to develop a database of suppliers. This was worth 9 marks. Marks to Question 6 ranged from 0 – 14 and the mean was 7.69.

Question 7

This question tested Module IX (Objectives 3, 5 and 6).

For Part (a), candidates were to identify three reasons why it is important for a company to maintain control of its inventory. This was worth 3 marks. Candidates responded to this part of the question satisfactorily.

For Part (b), candidates were to list ways in which the Optical Character Reader facilitates inventory control. This was worth 3 marks. This was not well done by candidates.

For Part (c), candidates were required to draft a Notice of Tender to obtain a suitable restaurant operator. This was worth 9 marks. Many candidates treated the tender as a memorandum or a report. Some did not utilise the information that was provided in the question.

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 6.46.

Question 8

This question tested Module XI (Objectives 2 and 3).

For Part (a), candidates were to list three duties performed by a clerk in the factory office. The majority of candidates scored full marks for this part of the question. It was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were to give three benefits of an interaction between the Dispatch and Transport Office and the Sales Department. This was worth 3 marks. This segment was completed with satisfaction.

For Part (c), candidates were to utilise information on an order form to complete a Bill of Lading form that was provided.

Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 8.99.

Paper 03/2 General Proficiency

The Alternative to the School-Based Assessment

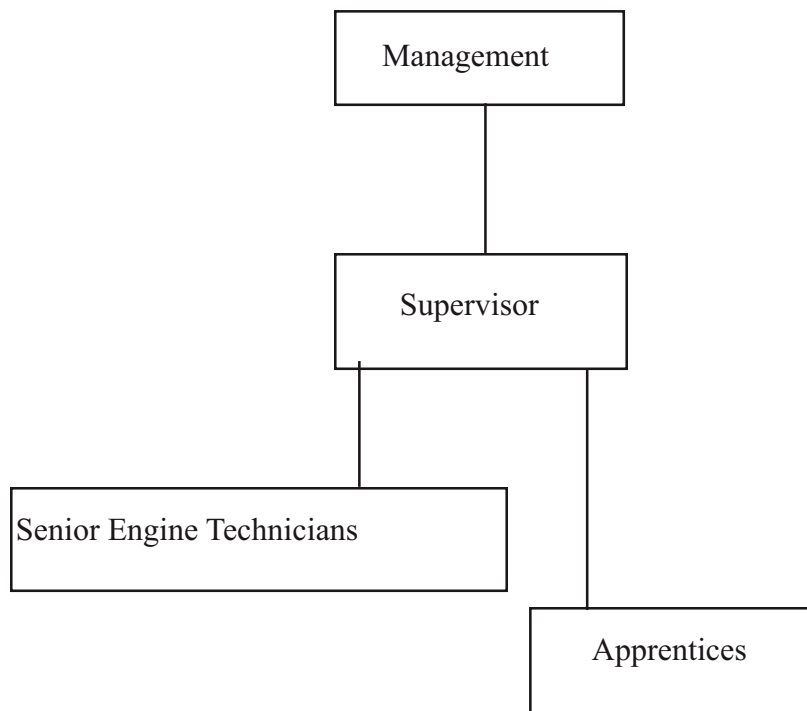
In order to answer the ten compulsory, structured questions, candidates were required to read the stimulus material provided in the form of a case. The entire paper was worth 50 marks.

The Case

The case discussed the organisational structure of Total Auto Service where Florent Desir worked as a Supervisor. As part of her duties she interfaced with employees at all levels. The organisation was well structured and operated efficiently. Its organisational objectives focused on the structuring of activities, concentration of authority and control of work flow. Holders of positions were empowered as they strove to optimise on their levels of performance.

The overall performance on this paper was less than satisfactory. Some questions were challenging to candidates.

In Question 1, candidates were required to draw an organisational chart to show the relationship among positions identified in the case. This was worth 5 marks. Many candidates did not label the chart. Additionally, they were required to place 'management' at the highest level with the 'Supervisor' position reporting directly to them. The 'Senior Engine Technicians' and 'Apprentices' are two separate groups that report to the Supervisor. However, the 'Apprentices' are placed at a slightly lower level. An example of what was required is provided below.



Organisational Chart of Total Auto Services

In Question 5 candidates were asked to identify two possible benefits to Total Auto Services of 'concentration of authority'. Possible responses could have been:

- Reducing demands on supervisors' time;
- Enhancing line and staff and how they feel about each other;
- Making employees more responsible;
- Enabling management to focus on issues;
- Provide more training to employees.

This question was worth 2 marks.

Questions 7 and 8 tested the memorandum and letter of application respectively. In spite of the fact that these topics have been appearing on past examination papers, candidates continue to perform poorly. On the memorandum they did not indicate the words 'Memorandum' as a heading, while in other instances, they neglected to provide pertinent information on the position of Apprentice Engine Technician, that interested persons should convey their interest to their supervisors in writing by the deadline date of January 20, 2007.

In Question 8, the letter format required the following: a return address, date, inside address to the Human Resource Manager, relevant salutation and complimentary close as essential requirements to earn candidates marks. The body of the letter should have included an identification of the position applied for, interest in the position, levels of competence and qualifications. Information on references and willingness to attend an interview were regarded as asset points for the letter. Both questions were worth 6 marks each.

Question 9 asked candidates to draw a pie chart to represent data that was provided. Candidates were also reminded to use appropriate labeling. In many instances they failed to label the chart and the individual sectors of the chart. Some candidates drew bar and cylinder charts instead of the pie chart.

Question 10 asked for five recommendations to junior staff to ensure they maintain high quality in their job performance. While recommendations were provided, some candidates did not ensure that they were relevant to the question and the content of the case.

The overall mean on this paper was 25.18. Scores ranged from 3 to 47.

Candidates who are preparing for examinations are asked to be aware of the new areas to be tested in this syllabus. They need also to devote some attention to the areas which are continually tested but in which candidates performance is indicated as being poor.

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

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

MAY/JUNE 2007

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2007

GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates' performance indicated that syllabus coverage was generally similar to that of previous years. In each paper some responses indicated that candidates were prepared for the examination, while in other instances the pattern of weaknesses continued. More specific comments will be addressed separately under each paper.

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Candidates' performance in this paper was quite consistent with performance in June 2006. The overall mean of the paper in the 2007 examination was 35.54 compared with 34.80 in 2006. The highest mark achieved was 56 out of a total of 60.

Paper 02 – Essay

This paper consisted of two sections. Section I, which comprised four compulsory questions, was based on Units I, II, III, IV and XII. These questions were attempted by the majority of candidates.

Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Units VII, VIII, IX, X and XI. Knowledge and application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and office routines were tested. Candidates were required to answer any two questions from Section II.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to the School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This paper is a written examination designed for the candidates who do not have a tutor for the supervision of the SBA project (out of school candidates). It was designed to test the candidates' ability to use their personal experiences on routine office activities that they may have acquired through observation or from doing the actual office tasks as a real employee. The paper consisted of ten short answer questions based on an office case. For this examination the case focused on Modules VIII and X of the syllabus.

In this paper, candidates' performance improved in some areas over that of previous examinations. It is noted that some topics continue to challenge candidates and affect their overall performance.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 - Essay

Section I – Compulsory Questions

Question 1

This question tested Module I, Objectives 2 (d) and 3 (c); Module V, Objectives (a – e).

For Part (a, i) candidates were required to give two reasons for the deployment of staff in an organization. It was worth 2 marks. Many candidates were not familiar with the term ‘deployment’ and interpreted it to mean ‘promotion or a means for getting a higher salary’.

For Part (a, ii), candidates were required to state two ways in which an employee may benefit from deployment. This was worth 2 marks. Some candidates repeated the answers given in Part (a, i) above.

For Part (b), candidates were asked to list three physical objects that can contribute to ergonomics in the office. This was worth 3 marks. Many responses indicated that candidates are unaware of the meaning of the term ‘ergonomics’ and overlooked the word ‘physical’ and gave broad responses like ‘environment’, ‘space’ or simply listed equipment or the use of technology.

For Part (c), candidates were to copy in their answer booklet a table that carried two column headings ‘employee’s responsibility’ and ‘employer’s responsibility’. They were to state one activity that indicates how each of the positive attitudes ‘team-spirit and cooperation, honesty, politeness, punctuality and regularity’ can be demonstrated. This was worth 8 marks. In many cases, the responses given for employees’ responsibility were repeated under employers’ responsibility. The responses for question 1, for the most part, were unsatisfactory.

Marks ranged from 0 to 15, and the mean was 5.7.

Question 2

This question tested Module II, Objectives 1 (c), 1 (a – d), (e) and 9 (c).

For Part (a, i), candidates were required to give one advantage and one disadvantage of using electronic mail (e-mail) as a means of communication in business. This was worth 2 marks. Responses on the advantages were well known, while for disadvantages, some candidates listed situations that did not pertain directly to the use of the electronic mail, for example, electrical failure.

For Part (a, ii), candidates were asked to list three examples of visual forms of communication. This was worth 3 marks. Many candidates listed examples of written communication.

For Part (a, iii) candidates were required to state two barriers to effective communication. This was worth 2 marks. The word ‘barriers’ was a challenge to some candidates.

For Part (b) candidates were to assume the given name of the receptionist at Ambit Marketing Services. They were to draft a voice message for customers, from information that was provided. This was worth 8 marks. The majority of candidates obtained full marks.

The overall performance in this question was satisfactory. Marks ranged from 0 to 15, while the mean was 7.5.

Question 3

This question tested Module III, Objectives 1 (a - c) and 2 (a - c).

For Part (a, i), candidates were to list four steps in the information cycle of an information management system. This was worth 4 marks. Many candidates listed the steps for filing a document.

For Part (a, ii), candidates were to identify three types of information that will be found in the records management system in a school. This was worth 3 marks. The majority of candidates were able to earn full marks for this segment of the question.

In Part (b, i), candidates were required to show the correct indexing order for four names. A four-column table was provided. This was worth 4 marks. This part of the question was not done well. In many instances only the first column was used to insert personal and business names. Names with 'of' and 'of the' challenged the majority of candidates with their placement in the indexing order.

For Part (b, ii), candidates were asked to prepare the cross-reference sheet for one name. This was worth 1 mark. Many candidates were unable to earn the allocated mark.

For Part (b, iii), candidates were asked to arrange the three remaining names in alphabetical order. This part of the question was also a challenge to many candidates. This was worth 3 marks.

It is to be noted that while information management is a major topic, candidates continue to experience difficulties. The overall performance in this question was weak. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 4.7.

Question 4

This question tested Module VI, Objectives 1 (b), 2 (a), 3(a) and Module XII.

For Part (a), candidates were to state three ways in which employees, while working in reception and hospitality, could portray a positive image of the business. This was worth 3 marks. The majority of candidates provided good quality responses to this part of the question.

For Part (b), candidates were required to identify two categories of visitors to the Reception and Hospitality area. This was worth 2 marks. The majority of candidates answered satisfactorily.

For Part (c), candidates were asked to list two steps that should be followed by the receptionist when cancelling an appointment. This was worth 2 marks. This segment was also well known to the majority of candidates.

For Part (d), candidates were to develop a checklist of four factors and four considerations to help them make a decision about applying for an advertised position. This was worth 8 marks. In many instances candidates repeated the worked example in their booklet. Some demonstrated that they were unaware of the meaning of the words 'factors' and 'considerations' and their uses within the context of applying for a job.

The overall performance in this question was satisfactory. Marks ranged from 0 to 15, and the mean was 9.4.

Section II – Optional Questions

Question 5

This question tested Module VII, Objectives 1 (a), (g) and 4 (a).

For Part (a), candidates were to identify three criteria that employees may use for short-listing applicants for a job. This was worth 3 marks. Many candidates were unclear about the meaning of the term 'short list' and indicated post-short-listing activities, for example, interviews.

For Part (b), candidates were to state three possible reasons for the dismissal of an employee from a job. This was worth 3 marks. Candidates responded to this part of the question quite well.

For Part (c, i), candidates were to use data provided to calculate the number of working days for the given number of employees for two consecutive years. This was worth 2 marks. Simple multiplication was to be used and many candidates were unable to provide correct responses.

For Part (c, ii), candidates were to calculate the percentage of working days lost in each of the two years. This was worth 4 marks.

For Part (c, iii), candidates were to draw a comparative graph. This was worth 3 marks. This part of the question was a challenge for the majority of candidates who attempted to answer it. In many instances they were unable to draw a correct graph, for example, a bar, column or pie.

Marks ranged from 0 to 14, with the mean of 4.2.

Question 6

This question tested Module IX, Objectives 2 (c), 3, and 6 (c).

For Part (a) candidates were to state three factors that the purchasing manager of a business should consider when ordering goods. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b) candidates were to give three reasons for keeping control of stock in a business. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c), candidates were required to use the form provided and the data given, to calculate the value of inventory using the FIFO method of stock valuation. This was worth 9 marks. This segment of the question challenged candidates as they were unable to apply the 'first in, first out' principles to stock movement.

Generally, the performance on this entire question was satisfactory.

Marks ranged from 1 to 15 and the mean was 6.9.

Question 7

This question tested Module XI, Objectives 1, 2 and 3.

For Part (a), candidates were to state two duties performed by clerical staff in the factory office. Some candidates provided general duties instead of duties that were specific to the factory office. This was worth 2 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were to list four documents used in the dispatch and transport of goods. Overall performance was satisfactory; however, many candidates were unable to provide the names of documents relevant to the factory office. This was worth 4 marks.

For Part (c) candidates were to use the form provided to complete an accident report form to enable the factory manager to sign it. This was worth 9 marks. In spite of the instructions provided, many candidates were unable to benefit from the 1 mark that was allocated for leaving the factory manager's signature space blank.

This was the most popular of the optional questions. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 9.4.

Question 8

This question tested Module X, Objectives 1 (a), 2 (a) and Module VIII, Objective 2(a).

For Part (a), candidates were to list three factors that must be considered when organizing promotional activities for a specific target market. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were to identify three persons with whom the marketing clerk may work to generate suitable packaging designs to promote their products. This was worth 3 marks.

Most candidates who answered these parts gave satisfactory responses.

For Part (c, i), candidates were presented with payroll data. They were required to calculate gross pay. For Part (c, ii) they were to calculate net wages for one week. This was worth 9 marks. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this section. Responses indicated that some candidates experienced difficulty with the calculation of gross and net wages. Many candidates did not show their working steps and simply provided an answer. As a result, they were unable to score marks for the workings seen, even if the final figure was incorrect.

Performance was weak on this question. Marks ranged from 0 to 15, and the mean was 5.8.

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. Modules II – Communications, VII – Human Resource Office, VIII – Accounts Office, X – Sales and Marketing, XI – Factory Office were tested.

The Case

The case was based on Mike's Hardware Store, a family oriented business that is seeking to expand and carve a deeper niche through the use of modern technology.

Question 1

Candidates were required to design an advertisement for Mike's Hardware Store to celebrate the company's 40th anniversary. The quality of responses for this question was of a high level as the majority of candidates used their creative skills. In many instances, however, they failed to use the information provided in the question within their responses. This question was worth 5 marks. The mean was 3.6.

Question 2

Candidates were asked to identify one way in which each of the departments (Purchasing, Accounting, Advertising, Sales and Despatch) contributes to Mike's Hardware Store. This was worth 5 marks. This was generally well done. The mean was 3.5.

Question 3

Candidates were required to list two possible types of dry stock and two types of furniture stock that would be on sale. This was worth 4 marks. This was generally well done. The mean was 2.71.

Question 4

This question asked candidates to design a questionnaire for Mike's Hardware Store to gather information from customers and prospective customers on the possibility of establishing a third store. This was worth 7 marks. Many of the items submitted did not relate to the case or its content. The mean was 3.7.

Question 5 (a)

Candidates were asked to state three marketing strategies that could be put in place by Mike's Hardware store to attract customers to purchase items at competitive prices. This was worth 3 marks. Candidates' performance on this question was satisfactory.

Question 5 (b)

This question asked candidates to identify three ways in which Mike's Hardware Store can ensure customer satisfaction. This was worth 3 marks.

Question 6

Candidates were asked to identify three safety measures that should be put in place by Mike's Hardware Store in the making of furniture. This was worth 3 marks. The mean was 1.4.

Question 7

Candidates were asked to state three precautions that may be taken by employees at Mike's Hardware Store to ensure their safety at the workplace. This was worth 3 marks. The mean was 1.4.

Question 8

This question asked candidates to state three traditional duties that may have been performed at Mike's Hardware Store, but which are now done using advanced technology. This was worth 6 marks. The mean was 2.5.

Question 9 (a)

Candidates were required to identify three personal skills/qualities that the staff would display at Mike's Hardware Store if they are to maintain efficient and dependable service. This question was worth 3 marks.

Question 9 (b)

This question asked candidates to identify three documents that would be used on a regular basis in the accounts department at Mike's Hardware Store. The majority of candidates were able to secure full marks. This was worth 3 marks.

Question 10

This question asked candidates to make five recommendations to Mike's Hardware Store that are likely to ensure a low turnover of staff. This question was worth 5 marks. The mean was 2.3.

The overall performance on the paper was satisfactory. Marks ranged from 0 – 49. The overall mean was 28.6.

School-Based Assessment

The School-Based Assessment must be presented by all candidates who enter for Office Administration and do not sit the 03/2 paper. Its objective is to develop in candidates, essential research skills that will enable them to function more effectively in the world of work.

Responses indicate that some of the candidates were not satisfactorily prepared and guided in their preparation processes. Additionally, teachers' strengths in particular areas were clearly evident in some schools where the span of topics covered were very limited.

A general observation is that while criteria are identified in the guidelines for the School-Based Assessment certain criteria, in far too many instances, were not adhered to and this resulted in the loss of marks. Some instances were:

- some candidates misinterpreted the 'functions of departments'. They provided the functions of individuals;
- letters were not of a mailable quality. There were many with inconsistent styles, wording and uncorrected errors;
- the schedule of activities was not in keeping with that outlined in the mark scheme;
- failure to write with the required number of words;
- failure to provide graphics;
- some schools are using the old version of the mark scheme;
- a wide disparity between the teacher's marks and the moderator's marks.

Segments on Regulations, Health and Safety, and Staff Rules were well done in most portfolios that were moderated.

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

1. It is important that the current syllabus be used by students as part of their study and preparation for the examination;
2. Teachers should familiarize themselves with the new concepts and jargon in the subject and incorporate them in the teaching and learning processes;
3. Several student-centred strategies should be utilized to enable cooperative groups and problem-based learning approaches in an effort to strengthen and develop student performance;
4. Increase practice in the completion of forms, preparation of checklists, reception registers;
5. More teacher guidance and practice opportunities in concepts that require calculation of values of stock inventory, for example, the FIFO/LIFO methods are required;
6. Students should be encouraged to present information as much as possible, in sentence form instead of one-word responses;
7. Students should be encouraged to follow examination instructions. More attention should be paid to how they number questions, and respond the correct number of questions in each section of the paper, for example, Paper 02.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

JANUARY 2008

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates' performance in the January 2008 sitting of Office Administration showed significant improvement. Specific comments on the candidates' performance will be addressed separately under each paper.

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.

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

The two profiles used in the assessment of Office Administration are Knowledge and Application. These two profiles are tested in the Paper 01 examination. Candidates performance in this paper improved significantly compared with performance in January 2006 and 2007. The mean of this Paper in 2006 and 2007 was 38.34 and 36.46 respectively compared with 40 in 2008. This improvement in performance is reflected in the overall improvement in the subject.

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Paper 02 also assesses Knowledge and Application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and office routines. The paper consists of _____ The total mark for this paper is 90. There are four compulsory questions in Section I based on Units I, II, III, IV, V, VI and XII. Section II consists of four optional questions taken from Units VII, VIII, IX, X and XI. Candidates are required to answer **ONLY** two questions from this section. For every sitting of the Office Administration examination there are candidates who ignore this instruction and do all four questions in this section to their detriment. Teachers must continue to encourage students to read the instructions given on the examination paper.

Candidates' overall performance in this paper compared with 2006 and 2007 was similar to their performance in the Paper 01. There was an overall increase in the mean performance from 38.48 and 42.08 in 2006 and 2007 respectively to 45.10 in 2008.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to the School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This paper is a written examination that targets private candidates. These candidates are identified as students who do not have the supervision of a teacher to complete the SBA project. The Paper is worth 50 marks. It is 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 consists of ten short answer questions based on an office case. For this examination the case focused on Units I, II and XII of the syllabus.

While candidates' performance in this paper improved in 2008 compared with 2007, the performance in 2008 was very consistent with that in 2006.

It is noted that some areas of the syllabus tested in this paper continue to present a challenge to the candidates. They, for instance, encounter great difficulty when they are asked to present information graphically, though they are given the choice of selecting an appropriate means for presentation.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Each question in this paper is worth 15 marks. All the questions in Section I are compulsory.

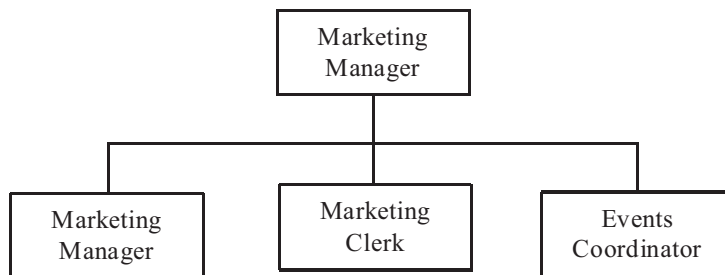
Question 1

This question tested Module I (objective 3) and Module IV (objective 3c).

For Part (a), candidates were required to list two advantages and two disadvantages of conventional/cellular and open plan layout of the office. This was worth 7 marks. Some candidates misunderstood the term “cellular”; others gave disadvantages for advantages and vice versa.

For Part (b), candidates were required to draw an organization chart to show the relationship among the Marketing Clerk, Graphic Artist, Marketing Manager and Promotion/Events Coordinator. This was worth 5 marks. This segment of the question proved to be challenging to the majority of candidates. Below is an example of an organization chart that would have been acceptable.

Example of an organization chart



(Graphic Artist and Marketing Clerk may be subordinate Events Coordinator)
(Marketing Clerk may be subordinate to Events Coordinator and Graphic Clerk)

In Part (c), candidates were asked to list three procedures that may be used for dealing with the visitor. This was worth 3 marks. Candidates demonstrated knowledge in this area and many were able to gain full marks.

Marks for this question ranged from 0 -15 and the mean was 7.58. The Examiners recommend that teachers expose students to the different terms used for the types of office and that they use pictures to illustrate. Teachers should also use charts /diagrams to expose students to a variety of organization charts.

Question 2

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

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to describe two ways in which (a) obtaining information and (b) conveying information can be achieved in an office. This was worth 4 marks.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were asked to identify three skills that are essential to the clerk who is performing the functions mentioned in (i) (a) and (b). This was worth 3 marks. Some candidates identified traits/qualities instead of skills. This problem persists though it has been emphasized in previous reports.

These two segments of this question were well done.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were required to draft a notice of meeting to be sent out to sales representatives. This was worth 3 marks. Most candidates were able to correctly present the notice of meeting in an acceptable format. Many candidates neglected to indicate the name of the document by placing the heading – NOTICE OF MEETING.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were to prepare a checklist of five tasks that must be performed in preparation for the meeting. This was worth 5 marks. The majority of candidates responded satisfactorily to this part of the question. Marks ranged from 0 -15 and the mean was 9.24.

Question 3

This question tested Module II (Objective 10a) and Module III (Objective 2b.)

For Part (a) (i), candidates were to state two characteristics of facsimile and e-mail, which are electronic channels of communication. This was worth 2 marks. The majority of candidates provided responses that were limited to the words ‘speed and fast’ as opposed to factors that relate to cost, equipment, capabilities, time barriers.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were to list three steps in the procedure for handling incoming mail. This was worth 3 marks. The majority of candidates earned full marks. However, there were cases where candidates responded in the form of an e-mail. A few candidates did not answer the question.

For Part (b) candidates were to arrange information in the geographical filing order. This was worth 8 marks. This part of the questions challenged many candidates who rearranged the information and did not apply the principles of arranging information in alphabetical order within the geographical filing method.

Marks ranged from 0 -15 and the mean was 8.16.

Question 4

This question tested Module VI (Objective 1) and Module XII (Objectives 3 and 5).

For Part (a), candidates were to list three types of travel services that can be obtained from a travel agency. This presented some difficulty to the candidates. This was worth 3 marks. The Examiners recommend that part of the students learning experience should be to visit a travel agency in their area to find out about the services offered.

For Part (b), candidates were asked to write a cover letter to apply for the vacant sales representative position that was advertised. This was worth 8 marks. While the majority of candidates were able to provide correct letter format, many neglected to indicate that the résumé was attached.

In Part (c), candidates were required to identify four factors that are to be considered before applying for the vacancy that was advertised. This was worth 4 marks. This part of the question was generally well done.

The overall performance in this question was satisfactory. Marks ranged from 0-14 and the mean was 7.19.

Section II – Optional Questions

Question 5

This question tested Module IX (Objective 6d) and Module VII (Objective 4b).

For Part (a), candidates were to list six ways in which the Optical Character Reader (OCR) can be beneficial to the business. This was worth 6 marks. Candidates' performance indicated that many were unfamiliar with the term.

For Part (b), candidates were to use the headings 'Job Summary, Accountable to, Work involved, Knowledge and skills' in the draft of a job description. Some candidates were able to provide appropriate information under each heading, while others did not use the headings appropriately or provided irrelevant information. This was worth 9 marks.

Candidates' performance on this question was fair. While marks ranged from 0-15 most of the candidates scored between 0-9.

Question 6

This question tested Module X (Objective 3f) and Module IX (Objectives 4a and 5a).

For Part (a) (i) candidates were to list four advantages that can be derived from purchasing a risograph for a school. This was worth 4 marks. Some responses evidence of candidates' lack of information on this piece of equipment.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were to describe a situation in which it is more economical to use a photocopier. To the candidates who were able to respond to Part (a) (i) this segment of the question presented little difficulty. This was worth 2 marks.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were to use the form provided to complete a purchase order. This part of the question was well done. The majority of candidates obtained maximum marks. This was worth 7 marks.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were asked to outline two stock control measures that the supervisor can enforce to ensure that the stocks he ordered for the new school year are not stolen. The performance on this part of the question was satisfactory. This was worth 2 marks.

This question was attempted by the majority of the candidates. Marks ranged from 0-14, and the mean was 7.62.

Question 7

The question tested Module VII (Objective 5) and Module VIII (Objective 3).

For Part (a), candidates were asked to list three internal factors and three external factors that contribute to high employee turnover in an organization. This was worth 6 marks. Some responses indicated candidates' inability to distinguish between internal and external factors.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were to complete the currency memorandum form provided. This was worth 5 marks. This segment of the question was well done. In some instances however, some candidates did not adhere to the instructions to use the highest denominations.

For Part (ii), candidates were required to prepare the cash summary for the bank. This was worth 4 marks. Many candidates failed to transfer the correct information from the currency memorandum to the cash summary. Some incurred errors in the totaling process.

This question was also a popular optional question. Marks ranged from 0-15 and the mean was 8.70.

Question 8

This question tested Module VIII (Objective 1f) and Module XI (Objectives 3a and c).

For Part (a), candidates were to identify three types of bank accounts, and for each type identified, they were to state one characteristic. It was worth 6 marks. Some candidates were unable to satisfy the requirements of the question.

For Part (b), candidates were to state the procedure to be followed in solving the problem of non delivery of goods. Candidates were also asked to make recommendations to resolve the problem. This was worth 9 marks. This segment was done fairly well. Marks ranged from 0-12 and the mean was 5.24.

Paper 03/2 General Proficiency

The Alternative to the School-Based Assessment

A short case was provided and candidates were required to read and respond to the 10 structured questions asked. This paper was worth 50 marks.

The Case

The case was entitled 'Keys to Employability Success'. It highlighted the life skills that young people should possess as they embark upon the job market. The central idea of the case was that in spite of the position sought and the academic and vocational abilities possessed, skills in critical thinking, human relations, planning and organizing, communication, decision-making, team-building and ethics are also essential requirements.

Question 1

Candidates were required to state three questions on career choices that they would ask the career guidance officer. This was worth 3 marks. The mean was 2.09. Some candidates wrote statements rather than questions, while others asked questions relating to their career choice rather than those of a general nature.

Question 2

Candidates were asked to develop a checklist of six 'things to do' to prepare for career week. This was worth 6 marks. The mean was 2.96. The candidates responded fairly well to this question. However, some candidates listed such items as pencils which are more suited for an interview. Some candidates ignored the stem which should have been used to guide them in preparing the checklist.

Question 3

Candidates were required to write a notice of a meeting to decide on the theme for the career address. This was worth 4 marks. The mean was 2.50. Candidates' responses to this question were satisfactory. Many candidates, however, failed to include a heading for the notice. While the venue, the time and date were in most cases included, the purpose of the meeting was often omitted.

Question 4

This question asked candidates to prepare a five item checklist for the meeting to decide on the theme. This was worth 5 marks. The mean was 2.56. This question was done fairly well. However, many candidates neglected to name the document.

Question 5

In this question, candidates were to prepare a press release to inform the school population and the community of career week. This was worth 7 marks. The mean was 3.26. Many candidates seemed unable to write a press release. Many gave unnecessary details and failed to include the pertinent points that would have informed the school and community of career week.

Question 6

Candidates were asked to write a letter to thank the guest speaker for his presentation. This was worth 7 marks. The mean was 4.50. Candidates' performance in this question was satisfactory. Candidates need to remember that they must follow the conventions of letter writing and include: date, salutation and appropriate complimentary close. be provided using an assumed name.

Question 7

Candidates were asked to draw a comparative graph to represent the data on expenditure for 2007 and 2008. This was worth 7 marks. The mean was 2.76. Many candidates failed to include a heading for the graph and the names of the axes.

Question 8

This question asked candidates to outline two benefits to an organization of working as a team. This was worth 2 marks. The mean was 1.58. Candidates' responses to this question indicated an understanding of teamwork and its benefits.

Question 9

Candidates were required to write two recommendations on improving career week. This question was worth 2 marks. The mean was 1.05. The question was fairly well done; but some candidates gave general recommendations for ensuring a successful career week ignoring the part of the question that indicated they should make recommendations to next year's business students.

Question 10

This question asked candidates to complete the résumé form provided. This was worth 7 marks. The mean was 5.87. The question was done well. Some candidates gave the name of the referees but did not provide contact details such as addresses telephone number.

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

Candidates should acquire a personal copy of the syllabus and incorporate it in their examination preparation process. They must also use the schools' report which would highlight points that they should use in their preparations. Teachers must continue to encourage students to do more practice exercises.

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2008**

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

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OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2008

GENERAL COMMENTS

There were some encouraging responses to questions in all three papers of the General Proficiency Examination.

The performance in questions testing the compulsory units of the syllabus improved over that of past years. While there were encouraging responses to the compulsory units as well as some of the optional units some candidates continue to produce unsatisfactory work. These areas are addressed in the detailed comments on individual questions.

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

The two profiles used in the assessment of Office Administration are Knowledge and Application. These two profiles are tested in the Paper 01 examination. Candidates' performance in this paper declined. The mean performance in 2008 is 31.75 compared with 35.54 in 2007.

Paper 02 – Essay

Paper 02 also assesses Knowledge and Application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and office routines. The paper consists of two sections. The paper contributes 90 marks to the entire examination. There are four compulsory questions in Section I based on Units I, II, III, IV, V, and XII.

Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Units VII, VIII, IX, X and XI. While candidates' performance in the Paper 01 declined performance in Paper 02 improved. The mean of Paper 02 in 2008 was 45.61 compared with 40.56 in 2007.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to the School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This paper took the form of a written examination that targeted candidates who would have difficulty completing 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 to solve office related problems. The paper consisted of ten short essay-type questions based on an office case. For this examination the case focused on Units II, VII and XII of the syllabus. Candidates' performance in this paper declined compared with 2007. In 2008 the mean score was 20.68 compared with 28.59 in 2007.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 - Essay

Section I – Compulsory Questions

Question 1

This question tested Module I, Objective 1 and Module II, Objective 10.

In Part (a), candidates were asked to state two other ways apart from through e-mail, that information is distributed (i) within an organization, and (ii) to customers. This was worth 2 marks each.

For Part (b), candidates were required to list three basic skills that are required of a general office clerk in a modern office. It was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c), candidates were provided with a scenario for which they were to compose an e-mail message. This was worth 8 marks. In some instances many candidates did not use the information provided in the stimulus in the e-mail messages. In other instances, some candidates wrote letters or neglected to use the assumed name.

Marks ranged from 0 – 15, and the mean was 9.19.

Question 2

This question tested Module II, Objective 6 and Module XII, Objective 3.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to give the meaning of the terms (i) telephone etiquette and (ii) 'smile with your voice'. This was worth 4 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were asked to list three categories of information contained in a telephone directory. This was worth 3 marks. Many candidates overlooked the word "categories" and resorted to listing any three items of information such as telephone numbers, addresses and names of subscribers.

For Part (c), candidates were required to use an assumed name to write a letter of application in response to an advertisement. This was worth 8 marks. In many instances the body of the letter was well done; however, some candidates were unable to provide appropriate letter format which included the date, an appropriate salutation and complimentary close in addressing the human resource manager. Some even wrote memos.

The overall performance in this question was satisfactory. The mean for this question was 8.80

Question 3

This question tested Module V, Objectives 1 and 2 and Module IV, Objective 2.

In Part (a), candidates were asked to define the terms 'adjourn' and 'motion' as they relate to meetings. This was worth 2 marks each. Candidates' responses indicate that they had very little knowledge of these terms that are associated with meetings.

For Part (b), candidates were required to identify three reasons why departmental meetings are important to staff. It was worth 3 marks. This part of the question was well done.

For Part (c), (i), candidates were provided with a checklist format that they were to copy into their answer booklet. A scenario indicated that a Procedures Manual was being developed to train new employees in customer relations. Candidates were to indicate six steps to be followed when screening and receiving visitors. In many instances candidates misinterpreted the question and did not provide the requirements for screening and receiving visitors. In other instances where steps were provided they were not listed in the proper order. This was worth 6 marks.

For Part (c), (ii), candidates were to write brief instructions for using the checklist. Most candidates obtained full marks for this section of the question. This was worth 2 marks.

Marks ranged from 1 – 15, and the mean was 6.43.

Question 4

This question tested Module III, Objectives 1, 2 and 5.

In Part (a), candidates were asked to identify three stages in the information cycle of a records management system. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were required to list four types of supplies used in the storage of records. It was worth 4 marks.

For Part (c), candidates were asked to arrange a list of potential providers in (i) indexing order and (ii) in filing order. This was worth 4 marks each. Many candidates were unable to arrange information in the indexing order. Instances that posed a challenge were the placement of 'The', 'St', and '&'. Attempts to place the list in filing order was equally challenging to some candidates. It is evident that more practice is required in these activities in spite of the fact that this type of question has been repeated over the years.

Marks ranged from 0 – 15, and the mean was 7.43.

Question 5

This question which was the most popular of the optional section, tested Module VII, Objectives 1 and 4 and Module VIII, Objective 5.

In Part (a), candidates were asked to state three situations in the workplace that may result in the need for disciplinary action by the human resource department. The majority of candidates provided appropriate responses. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were required to list three pieces of information that are included in a Contract of Employment. This segment of the question was well done. It was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c), candidates were provided with information on a payroll. They were to use the form provided to complete in (i) the wage cash analysis sheet. They were advised to use the highest denomination in each case. Some candidates did not adhere to this requirement and were not awarded marks in this instance. This was worth 6 marks.

In (ii) candidates were to complete the withdrawal slip for the total sum of money to be withdrawn. This was worth 3 marks.

Marks ranged from 0 – 15, and the mean was 9.12.

Question 6

This question tested Module X, Objectives 1, 2 and 3, and Module IX, Objective 6 (c).

For Part (a), candidates were required to state three functions of the sales clerk in engaging in customer follow-up. It was worth 3 marks.

In Part (b), candidates were asked to state three ways in which the facsimile, answering machine or risograph contribute to efficiency in the sales and marketing office. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c), candidates were provided with a stock record card. They were asked to calculate the value of closing stock using the LIFO method of stock valuation. This was worth 9 marks. Candidates were reminded to show workings in the answer booklet however, many continue to be challenged by this type of question and do not provide workings.

Marks ranged from 0 – 15, and the mean was 5.78.

Question 7

This question tested Module IX, Objectives 3 and 6, and Module X, Objectives 1 and 2.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to name the bar code symbol that was provided. It was worth 1 mark.

In Part (a), (ii), candidates were to state two ways in which the bar code symbol is used in stock control. This was worth 2 marks.

In Part (b), candidates were asked to identify three documents that are used in the purchasing procedure. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c), candidates were provided with a scenario where they were asked to develop a new portfolio of promotional strategies for the latest cellular telephone. In (i) they were to state four promotional activities that may be organized for the launch of the cellular telephone. This was worth 4 marks.

In (ii), candidates were to prepare an advertisement on any media to inform buyers about the cellular telephone's latest technology, size, appearance, availability and price. This was worth 5 marks.

Question 7 was not well done. Teachers should expose students to actual copies of these documents so they become familiar with them.

Marks ranged from 0 – 15, and the mean was 6.48.

Question 8

This question which was the least popular of those selected. It tested Module X, Objective 1 and Module XI, Objectives 1, 2 and 3.

For Part (a), candidates were required to identify three functions of the factory office. It was worth 3 marks. This was well done. Many candidates scored full marks.

In Part (b), candidates were asked to list three documents used when sending air freight to another country. This was worth 3 marks. This part of the question was also well done.

For Part (c), candidates were provided with a job cost card. In (i) they were asked to show the procedure used to calculate the total costs, factory overheads, total costs of job and cost per unit. This was worth 5 marks. This part of the question proved to be difficult for the candidates. Some candidates explained the steps instead of calculating the total cost of the job. Candidates generally do not do well on the questions requiring simple calculations. Teachers are encouraged to provide ample opportunities in the classroom for students to work with numbers.

In (ii), candidates were to calculate whether there will be a profit or loss at the price of \$10.00 that he plans to sell the t-shirts, and if so, how much. This was worth 2 marks.

In (iii), candidates were asked to state two reasons for the production manager's liaising with the accounts department on this job.

Marks ranged from 0 – 15, and the mean was 5.42.

Paper 03/2 General Proficiency

The Alternative to the School-Based Assessment

Question 1

This question required to candidates list three (3) functions that are usually performed in schools' administrative processes:

Record Keeping
Word Processing
Updating Accounts

This question was worth 6 marks.

Many candidates did not approach the focus on the functions usually involved in the processes listed. They often defined the terms used and stated their advantages; therefore, they scored the minimum marks.

Question 2

Most candidates answered this question in a general sense not relating it to job entry-level positions. They knew that from the Business Studies Programme in school, some of the activities that took place in the world of work, and to some extent, information obtained in the case study. Some candidates were able to score the full 3 marks allotted to this question.

Question 3

Many candidates misinterpreted this question which required that they state the contributions that can be made by certain job positions, in achieving the organization's goals. The responses were mainly based on what new positions they could achieve, and not on the duties the individuals had to perform to contribute to the achievement of the organization's goals. They knew the attitudes, attributes and skills required but could not say in any intelligible manner, how these would advance the position of the organization. They mentioned that the clerical assistant could become a manager and the bank teller a financial analyst, but not how the entry level position helped the business, immediately. Out of a possible 8 marks, most candidates scored 4.

Question 4

This question required candidates to chart data given. Some drew a line graph or histogram, on the graph paper provided. Generally the graphs were not labelled for the most part, and if they were, they were done only on one axis. The intervals were inconsistent, and some candidates merely used the data given to them and failed to put any intervals in between. Many candidates failed to insert the title for the graph, label the axes, use appropriate intervals or plot the data properly. Few candidates were able to score the 5 marks allotted to this question. Most were able to score 2 – 4 marks.

Question 5

This question called for candidates to state the activities a person should engage in, to remain competitive in the job market, but they seemed to place emphasis on a company's attempts to remain competitive in the marketplace. This resulted in candidates failing to score or at most getting 0 – 2 marks for the question. A few candidates, however, managed to obtain 3 marks.

Question 6

Candidates were required to consider the focus of guidance counseling but they examined instead the considerations in seeking employment.

Question 7

Candidates were required to write a letter. The scores for this question ranged from 3 – 7. Few candidates scored the full 7 marks allotted. They were not clear on the proper complimentary closing to use with a specific salutation. They often left out the return address, or the date and the inside address. Many candidates were able to zero in on what the question asked and to compose a letter, albeit with poor grammar and punctuation.

Question 8

This question gave candidates the opportunity to be creative and to structure questions that may be addressed in a training programme to meet the needs of the organization. Some candidates focused on the type of question that elicited the needs of the organization and the needs of the workers. Many of them failed to determine what the criteria would be.

Question 9

The responses to this question were satisfactory. They had the general idea of the response by stating that through customer relations and employee satisfaction, a company can be profitable. Some of the responses were poorly expressed.

Question 10

This section seemed widely known and allowed candidates to express themselves. They stated that through work experience, there should be attitude change, but this point was expressed in a variety of ways, yielding in the end, only one answer. Many failed to differentiate between employee and employer benefits.

School-Based Assessment

The School-Based Assessment component of the Office Administration Syllabus is designed to give candidates an opportunity to apply skills, knowledge and attributes and attitudes acquired in Office Administration classes, during the secondary school experience, in a practical manner. This is demonstrated by the compilation of a project which synthesizes skills in letter writing, structuring a questionnaire, developing a work plan, observing equipment employed in business, gathering information by means of reading, via the internet, through interviews and analyzing data obtained noting the strengths, weaknesses and limitations. This is then compiled in a report complete with title page, table of contents and bibliography.

In general, candidates were able to present the **Title Page** with the required information such as names of: the teacher, school, candidate, examination body and the subject under examination.

Table of Contents: Most candidates displayed sections as per the marking scheme in left-hand column, with page numbers aligned in the right-hand column. Very few candidates used leader dots to align the Content with the Page Numbers.

Stated the title of the project: Some of the topics selected were often not carefully structured. They were too broad and in some cases outside the scope of the syllabus. This topic must be related to objectives in the syllabus and framed in a manner to indicate that the candidate is examining or researching some specific area which has some educational or social value from which (s)he will learn. They should not be too broadly stated, thus creating an overwhelming workload for the candidate.

Aims: The aims must be stated clearly. It must state precisely what the candidate is setting out to do. Many candidates failed to state these in a manner which tied them in to the title of the project.

Functions: This should be the function of the department under observation as relates to the title of the project. Many candidates did not gain full marks in this area.

Correspondence: Many candidates failed to follow the general principle in letter writing. This should be a letter composed by the candidates seeking permission to carry out the research. In instances where the letter is written as a form letter by the school, candidates are required to write their own letter stating the objective to be achieved by the individual researcher. Attention must be paid to the format of the letter: return address, date, addressee, salutation and complimentary close, paragraphing, grammar, enclosure. The letter should be signed by the writer.

Methodology: Apart from the specimen, the candidates are required to submit particulars of why that particular instrument was chosen instead of some other method of gathering information for the project. They are also required to explain how they used the instrument. This section was poorly done by most candidates as they failed to justify use of the instrument.

Questions: This was done satisfactorily by most candidates. Few failed to submit relevant questions. The questions were often taken off the Questionnaire.

Schedule of Activities: Most candidates submitted a schedule of activities. Most candidates listed the sequence as they progressed through the research, and made appropriate comments. In some cases, it was evident that candidates were unsure of what was required of them, and listed less than the minimum required activities, and excluded the comments column.

Regulations/Policies: Evidence of a piece of legislation is designed to sensitize candidates to an awareness of the laws governing the workplace. It would be useful therefore if they would obtain a copy of the relevant legislation or make reference to the specific regulation and what it is intended to do. The same would apply to the policies of the organization and rule relating to employees and which the candidate was subject to.

Candidates should know how to differentiate the following:

Legislation (or statutory law) is law which has been enacted by the governing body and actively regulates the operation of the business. Examples are the Company Act, Shop and Factory Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act.

Policies on the other hand, are a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve goals. Policy may also refer to the important organizational decisions, such as spending priorities, and choosing among them on the basis of the impact they will have. There may be management, financial, and administrative policies, designed to reach explicit goals. For example, an organization may accept a legal and moral obligation to ensure that staff are not subjected to Sex Discrimination, through harassment, bullying or workplace violence by ensuring that in the event of alleged discrimination, harassment, bullying or workplace violence, a staff member, or their representative, may refer the matter to the human resource manager or notify a shop steward¹.

Many large companies have policies that all purchases above a certain value must be performed through a purchasing process. By requiring this standard purchasing process through policy, the organization can limit waste and standardize the way purchasing is done.

Staff Rule: These rules are generally established by management and apply to all staff or categories of staff, except where specifically provided and may include the candidate who is doing the research. An example with regards to Court Employees: Court employees shall not solicit, accept or agree to accept any gifts or gratuities from attorneys or other persons having or likely to have any official transaction with the court system².

¹ <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary>

² <http://www.nycourts.gov/courtinterpreter>

Presentation: While some candidates presented a well written report, many wrote brief notes on the findings. This should be well written, synthesizing the entire project. Many candidates were not able to state what they had accomplished by doing the research. They seemed able to express the challenges they encountered, but were unable to do the same with the problem-solving strategy to overcome the challenges.

Business forms: The business form used in the project must be related to the business under consideration. Some candidates simply included forms that had no relevance to what they set out to do. The forms and the title must be related.

Bibliography: Most candidates failed in getting the maximum marks allotted for this section as they incompletely listed either the literature or the books read.

(With 3 writers)

Below is an example of the correct format for the bibliographic entries.

Finisterre, S., Payne, L & Reid, J. (2004) Longman Office Administration for CXC. Pearson Education Limited, England.

Hewitt, Les, Andrew Hewitt, and Luc d'Abadie. The Power of Focus for College Students. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2005.

(With 1 writer)

MLA Handbook for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations , (New York: MLA, 1977)
Gen. Ref. Z 253

Rowling, J. K. Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. New York: Scholastic, 1999

(Person interviewed or resource person)

Ms. Johenn Almanzar
Purchasing Manager
School Supplies Incorporated
Nukes, Lethem, Guyana

Website visited: <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary>
<http://www.nycourts.gov/courtinterpreter>
<http://www.caricom.org>

Whereas some candidates may not have access to each media, the medium used should be stated correctly.

Office Equipment: As required by the mark scheme on-line and in the syllabus, the equipment stated in the SBA, must be equipment observed or used in the business studied. Candidates are required to list the equipment, state its use, and its suitability for the specific function, in the business under consideration, be it an office or a factory. Most candidates referred to the equipment employed by them in the preparation of the SBA.

The Caribbean Examinations Council provides a detailed Mark Scheme which was posted on their website in January 2008, outlining the tasks, criteria and marks for each section. The total score for the research project is 50 marks and accounts for 25% of the final mark in the Office Administration examination.

It is evident that there are some teachers who are not familiar with the revised mark scheme as the projects were not in compliance with the current requirements.

Marks for the SBA this year ranged from 13 – 50. Those who scored high exhibited extensive research skills on the topic they had selected, whereas those who obtained low marks, generally did not comply with the requirements of the syllabus.

The weaknesses identified included:

- Failure to attach to the project, the mark scheme showing how the candidate was marked
- As it related to the major accomplishments/findings, candidates failed to make the connection with the aims identified
- Some schools submitted SBAs that were based on the 2004 syllabus and mark scheme.
- With regards to methodology, there is no clear definition about how candidates gathered the data. For example how long it took to administer and collect data, how many persons were in the sample, why they were selected and how a particular instrument was used, instead of another
- Stating how candidates became aware of the legislation regulating the workplace.
- Incorrect listing of sources
- Sources of information must include:
 - For persons interviewed: Date, Place and Job Title
 - Publications: Use APA style or MPA or other approved style
 - Internet sites: address of the website, name of authors and organizations
- Students are to be monitored throughout the project to ensure the SBA is done correctly and that the stipulated guidelines in the current syllabus are being followed
- Not stating the department of the organization under study.
- The department under examination in the business should be identified in the title of the project.

Recommendations to Teachers

- Create a glossary of commonly used terms
- Give more exposure to Paper3/2 type question
- Education departments should plan workshops for private candidates
- Preparation of letters for various occasions
- Development of observation and research skills
- Encourage reading and practice of numerical computations.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE JANUARY 2009

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

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OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS

JANUARY 2009

GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates' overall performance in the January 2009 Office Administration sitting indicated that syllabus coverage was similar to that of previous years. In each of the three papers, responses revealed that candidates were prepared for the examination, notwithstanding, weaknesses in some areas. More specific comments will be addressed separately under each paper. 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 modules.

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Candidates' performance in the 2009 paper did not show an improvement over that of January 2008. The overall mean of the paper in the 2008 examination was 40 compared with 36.51 for January 2009. Marks ranged from 0 to 56 out of a total of 60.

Paper 02 – Short Answer

This paper consisted of two sections. Section I comprised four compulsory questions based on Units I, II, III, IV, V and VI. These questions were attempted by the majority of the candidates.

Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Units VII, IX, X and XI. Knowledge and the application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and office routines were tested. The overall mean for this Paper was 39.2 compared with 45.1 in 2008. Scores ranged from 0 to 69 out of a maximum of 90 marks. However, some topics continue to challenge candidates and this is reflected in their overall performance.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to the School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This paper is a written examination that targets private candidates who would not have the opportunity to complete SBA projects required of school candidates who are under direct supervision of their teachers. 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 short essay-type questions based on an office case. For this examination the case focused on Units I, II, VII, and X of the syllabus.

In this paper, candidates' performance was below that of the last two years. It is noted that some areas continue to challenge candidates and affect their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 20.91 compared to 28.50 in 2008 and 26.04 in 2007. Marks ranged from 01 to 43 out of 50.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Short Answer

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

Question 1

This question tested Module III (Objective 1), Module II (Objective 3 (a)), and Module I (Objectives 3 (a) and (b)).

For Part (a), candidates were required to list three steps used to process a letter from receipt to filing under an appropriate heading. This was worth 3 marks. Most candidates were able to list one or two of the steps which include processing enclosures, index, code and sort, and were able to score at least one mark out of a total of three marks allotted to this part of the question.

For Part (b), candidates were required to draft a letter in response to the offer as stated in the letter given. Most candidates failed to insert "Draft", hence only about 6% of the candidates were awarded a mark in this area. In their response, some candidates used the date the letter was sent to "Staropener" rather than the date given in the question, the examination date or any date after the date given in the question. This was worth 8 marks.

In Part (c), candidates were to list one advantage and one disadvantage each of the Conventional Plan and the Open Plan. Part (c) was widely known and most candidates performed satisfactorily. Some candidates, however, were not able to clearly distinguish between the Convention Plan (otherwise known as traditional, enclosed or cellular) and the Open Plan. This was worth 4 marks.

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 6.11.

Question 2

This question tested Module II (Objective 2), Module VI (Objective 1 (b)) and Module V (Objective 1 (a)).

For Part (a), candidates were required to list four factors that a business should consider when deciding to use the World Wide Web (WWW) as a medium of communication. This was worth 4 marks.

The majority of candidates responded satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving appropriate responses such as level of training for staff, availability of equipment/URL/Internet/Website, cost, audience and nature of the communication.

For Part (b), candidates were required to state three ways in which an itinerary could be important to a manager who has to travel abroad to address a marketing group. This was worth 3 marks.

Many candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this part of the question, seemingly misinterpreting the instructions given. The candidates gave the meaning of an itinerary instead of giving its importance to persons traveling. Some appropriate responses would include: keep manager informed, organized, and providing supplemental data, such as documents required.

For Part (c), candidates were to prepare a Notice and Agenda to circulate to members of the Marketing Department, informing them of the manager's intention to convene a meeting within two days. The meeting was scheduled to take place in the conference room where the team would elect a member to head a committee that would put the marketing plan into action so that the jeans would be available to the public by the end of the next month. This was worth 8 marks.

This segment of the question was done unsatisfactorily. Many candidates were not able to distinguish between the content relating to the notice and that pertaining to an agenda. In addition, the correct format for a combined notice and agenda was not demonstrated. The notice should include the venue, date, and time; while the agenda should show information such as "call to order, confirmation of minutes, matters arising, adjournment".

Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 7.55.

Question 3

This question tested Module III (Objective 3), Module III (Objective 2 (ii)), and Module IV (Objective 2 (c)).

For Part (a), candidates were to identify three steps that should be taken with files that will no longer be used. This was worth 3 marks.

Most candidates failed to give all three steps requested. Some candidates gave steps for dealing with active/current files. However, a few candidates gave appropriate responses such as: verify that the file is no longer needed, shred/destroy, put on microfilm, or store in boxes and archive.

For Part (b) candidates were to state four ways in which a charge-out card is useful to the records management clerk. This was worth 4 marks.

This part of the question challenged many candidates who seemed to be unfamiliar with the term “charge-out card”, and gave the usefulness of the “time card” instead. A few candidates were able to give appropriate responses such as monitoring use, monitor path, and make file available to many people.

Part (c) tested candidates’ ability to prepare a Reception Register with appropriate headings and record the visitors to a company. It was worth 8 marks.

This was the most popular part of the question. Most candidates were able to use appropriate headings, such as date, name, company, address, time in/out, and included the heading of the form which is “Reception Register”. However, many candidates failed to arrange the visitors in correct chronological order according to the time of their appointments.

Marks ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 7.39.

Question 4

This question tested Module V (Objective 1 (c, e and f), Module V (Objective 3), and Module VI (Objective 1 (a).

For Part (a), candidates were to define: verbatim, proxy, and casting vote. This was worth 3 marks.

Although some satisfactory responses were given, some candidates failed to define the term “casting vote” adequately, giving interpretations such as casting a vote, or showing of hands to represent your vote. Some candidates interpreted “proxy” to mean “close proximity”, while others defined “verbatim” as verbal or oral presentation. A more appropriate response for “casting vote” would be: the vote of a chairman in making a decision when there are equal votes for and against an item under discussion. Verbatim is using the exact words as a direct quotation from oral or written text, while proxy is someone who is authorized, usually in writing, to act on behalf of another person at a meeting.

For Part (b), candidates were to list two of the duties performed in a meeting by the chairman and the secretary. This was worth 4 marks.

While the majority of candidates were able to provide correct responses, many failed to relate to the duties performed in a meeting and not duties performed before and after by the chairman and the secretary. The chairman’s duties include conducting meetings in an orderly manner and ensuring that standing orders are observed, while the secretary records and circulates minutes, records attendance, reads correspondence and assists with seating arrangements.

In Part (c), candidates were given a scenario where an executive will be attending a regional conference, given certain dates. Registration for the event must be completed in advance at the conference venue in Belize. Candidates were required to assist in making the arrangements for travel by preparing a checklist showing four things that they must do to ensure the executive member attends the conference. This was worth 8 marks.

This part of the question was generally challenging to many candidates. In preparing a checklist, instructions must be given for its completion and must be done using an appropriate format. In most instances, candidates were able to list the four things they should do to ensure the executive attends the conference. These include: registration, airline booking, taxi arrangement, itinerary and hotel accommodation.

The overall performance in this question was satisfactory. Marks ranged from 0 to 12 and the mean was 5.99.

Section II – Optional Questions

Question 5

This question tested Module I (Objective 2 (d)) and Module VII (Objective 1 (f, d)).

For Part (a), candidates were to state three reasons why a business may find it necessary to deploy staff. This was worth 3 marks.

Candidates' performance indicated that many were not familiar with the term "deploying staff" and thus were unable to give the required number of correct responses such as: exposure of employees to new skills, unethical practices such as theft and habitual lateness, restructuring objectives and reduction of personal discomfort.

For Part (b), candidates were to state three effects of staff welfare programmes within a company. This was worth 3 marks.

While some candidates gave irrelevant responses, others were able to provide appropriate responses such as: satisfied employees lower labour turnover, increased productivity and less cause for industrial actions.

In Part (c), candidates were required to outline two ways in which an employee appraisal system may benefit the employee and the organization. It was worth 9 marks.

The overall performance in this part of the question was satisfactory. Correct responses for the employee include: assessing strengths to better position them, assess weaknesses to facilitate training, motivate and identify promotional opportunities and capacities. For the organization, correct responses given include: achievement of organizational goals, help organization to cater better for individual training needs, for fair/consistent remuneration, inform organization to place employees for optimal utilization of skills and meeting Human Resource Management requirements.

Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 5.43.

Question 6

This question tested Module IX (Objective 1 (a, b, e), Module IX (Objective 5) and Module X (Objective 4 (d)).

For Part (a) (i), (ii), and (iii) candidates were to define the following terms used in sales transactions: Free on Board (FOB); Cost, Insurance & Freight (CIF) and Ex Works. It was worth 3 marks.

Some responses given indicated evidence of candidates' lack of information on the definitions of the terms used in sales transactions. An expected response for FOB would be: purchase price includes all costs up to and including loading on to the carrier; CIF: price includes all costs including the insurance of the shipment; while Ex Works means the cost of goods is the basic price and does not include shipment costs.

For Part (b), candidates were to state three ways in which the use of modern technology at "point of sale" check-out counters has facilitated inventory control. This was worth 3 marks.

This segment of the question presented some difficulty to many candidates who should have included in their responses: perpetual inventory, signals reorder, more ready assessment of trends and unique identification of items through barcodes.

For Part (c) (i), candidates were to use the Purchase Order Form provided to complete an order in the Purchasing Department. This part of the question was well done. The majority of candidates obtained maximum marks. This was worth 7 marks.

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were asked to calculate the revised purchase order total, given a quantity discount of 2% which has been applied to the price of the envelopes. The performance on this part of the question was satisfactory. This was worth 2 marks.

This question was attempted by the majority of the candidates. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 6.91.

Question 7

The question tested Module X (Objective 1 (d)), Module X (Objective 2 (i)) and Module X (Objective 4).

For Part (a), candidates were asked to give three reasons why it is important for the sales and marketing office to engage in customer follow-up. This was worth 3 marks. Some responses indicated candidates' inability to give three clear reasons which should include: finding out what consumers need, determining whether the product was satisfactory and to maintain the company's clientele.

For Part (b), candidates were to list three duties of a clerk in the sales department. This was worth 3 marks.

This segment of the question was satisfactorily done and included: preparation of documents, maintenance and filing of records, liaise with departments and demonstrate good customer service/relationship.

For Part (c), candidates were required to compute the discount and other charges to reconcile an account as certain discounts were omitted from a customer's invoice which was shown in an incomplete record. It was worth 9 marks.

Many candidates computed the correct discount and other charges to reconcile the account. However, some candidates incurred errors in computing the discount and the totaling process.

This question was also a popular optional question. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 7.75.

Question 8

This question tested Module XI (Objective 1 (b)), Module XI (Objective 2 (d) and Module XI (Objective 3(ii) (a)).

For Part (a), candidates were to state two ways in which ensuring quality control of goods produced in a factory will be of benefit to the factory and customer. It was worth 4 marks.

Candidates' responses to part (a) were satisfactory which included for the factory: optimize materials/skills, save capital, and maintaining reputation and goodwill, while for the customer: better confidence in the product/manufacturer and recommendation to others.

For Part (b), candidates were to identify two ways in which a carefully completed cost card would benefit a company responsible for the production of goods and the provision of services. This was worth 2 marks.

Responses to this part of the question indicated that candidates had difficulty in providing appropriate answers which should include: more accurate pricing, better profit/loss analysis and analysis of internal systems.

For Part (c), candidates were to use the information provided to complete a delivery schedule, given a layout of Mongouge. They were to copy the headings "Destination" and "Client" in their answer booklet and indicate the vehicle, vehicle number and the driver, showing a logical delivery sequence. It was worth 9 marks.

Some candidates were unable to satisfy the requirements of this question. The responses indicated that many candidates had challenges in completing a logical delivery sequence, failed to design the form as required and state the name of the document they were preparing.

This was not a popular optional question. Marks ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 8.64.

Paper 03/2

The Alternative to the School-Based Assessment

A short case was provided and the candidates were required to read and respond to the structured questions. This paper was worth 50 marks.

The Case

The case was entitled “The Rise and Fall of Apex Inc.” It highlighted a large service complex that offers training in the use of office supplies and equipment in an ideal business environment. Despite their effort to provide quality service to clients, coupled with good customer relations, they had to face stiff competition from other firms to remain viable. Salaries for staff and scholarships for employees were posing a huge financial constraint and an immediate answer would be to increase the fees for training. This spelt trouble for Apex Inc. as fewer persons began to register for training.

Question 1

Candidates were required to state one way in which each of the following: file folders, treasury tags and CD-ROMS are used at the company on a daily basis in the training of clients. This was worth 3 marks. The mean mark was 1.88.

Some candidates seemingly overlooked the part of the question that referred to the training of clients, and gave definitions instead. Appropriate responses would include: the file folder could be used for the teaching of principles of records management and to hold training materials; the treasury tags could be used for teaching principles of filing and to secure training materials, while CD Roms could be used for teaching principles of storage on the computer or to store content/information for training.

Question 2

Candidates were asked to identify four corresponding modern replacements for manual typewriters, telex machines, spirit duplicators and PMBX switchboards, and state the purpose of each piece of modern equipment. This was worth 8 marks. The mean mark was 4.44.

Most candidates gave the computer or word processor as the correct response to manual typewriters, and computer modem with e-mail and Internet, telephone or fax machine for the telex machine. Others failed to give the photocopier and Risograph to replace the spirit duplicator, and the PABX switchboard with answering machine to replace the PMBX switchboard.

Question 3

Candidates were required to state two ways in which the layout of furniture and lighting as two ergonomic factors contribute to enhancing the workplace. This was worth 4 marks. The mean mark was 1.69.

Some candidates failed to state how the two factors contribute to enhancing the workplace. Expected responses for the layout of furniture should include: proper layout speaks to optimal use of floor space and employees' comfort for increased productivity; while lighting, when evenly distributed promotes proper illumination, free of shadows/glare on computer screens to allow employees to work efficiently.

Question 4 (a)

This part of the question asked candidates to identify three methods of gathering information in a survey of clients' needs and concerns about new and improved services. This was worth 3 marks.

Most candidates responded correctly by stating: interviews, questionnaires, observation, suggestion box/help desk for collection of complaints, and focus groups/stakeholders as methods to gather information.

Question 4 (b)

In this part of the question, candidates were to design an instrument with four items to be used in one of the methods they identified in 4 (a). This was worth 4 marks

Some responses to items given by candidates were irrelevant to the issues outlined in the case. Responses should have included: What types of office supplies are used in training clients? What modern equipment is procured to replace traditional equipment? What is the quality of service given to clients? What health and safety measures are practised by the business?

Question 5

Candidates were asked to state three health and safety precautions that Apex Inc. should implement to ensure that clients are adequately protected. This was worth 3 marks. The mean mark was 1.08.

Correct responses given included: safety equipment (fire extinguishers, security cameras, smoke detectors), protective clothing where necessary, safety signs, handrails, first aid kit, training, and adequate room/proper lighting.

Question 6

Candidates were asked to identify three things, other than increasing fees, that Apex Inc. could do to ensure their survival in a highly competitive market. This was worth 3 marks. The mean was 1.32.

Among the appropriate responses given by the candidates were: freeze salaries, fund raising, vigilant in spending patterns, diversify and strategic management.

Question 7

This question asked candidates to state four computer applications that Apex Inc. could offer to their clients to make them marketable. This was worth 4 marks. The mean mark was 1.26.

This was satisfactorily done and included the following responses: Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Access, Publisher and Quicken.

Question 8

Candidates were required to state four jobs/professions in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and for each job/profession identified, state its function. This question was worth 8 marks. The mean mark was 2.52.

Correct responses given for ICT jobs/professions included: Data Entry Operator, Technicians, IT Teacher, Computer Sales Reps, ICT Managers, Systems Analysts, and Graphic Designers. Most candidates indicated a good knowledge base of the functions of the majority of the professions identified.

Question 9

This question asked candidates to draft a memorandum to all members of staff, from the managing director, inviting them to a meeting to discuss the restructuring programme of the company. The meeting was scheduled for the main Conference Room at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, January 19, 2009. The question was worth 6 marks. The mean mark was 3.30.

Some candidates failed to include the heading “Memorandum” and to insert the sub-headings: To, From, Date and Subject. The content for the body of the memorandum was satisfactorily done based on the information given, and correct grammar, spelling and structure were used.

Question 10

This question asked candidates to state two ways in which Apex Inc. could seek to maintain good interpersonal relationships with employees during the restructuring process. This was worth 4 marks. The mean mark was 1.77.

Generally, candidates included correct responses such as: open communication with staff, put support systems in place, develop trust, be honest, act fairly/impartially, set appropriate timelines, and negotiate in good faith.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERALL IMPROVEMENT

1. Candidates should acquire a personal copy of the syllabus and incorporate it in the process of their examination preparation. The use of past papers would be of invaluable help in time management and preparation for the actual examination.
2. Greater emphasis should be placed on the later modules of the syllabus and newer content areas to develop a clear understanding of examination requirements and guidelines, and in keeping with current trends and practices at the workplace.
3. There should be increased practice in the completion of forms and other documents, especially preparation of drafts, checklists, registers and travel schedules.
4. Candidates should be aware of the rules of grammar, spelling, structure and presentation in Office Administration activities and apply these competently.

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	<i>Action Required to Complete Task</i>	<i>Resources Needed</i>
(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 identified 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.

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

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

MAY/JUNE 2010

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL PROFICIENCY

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Office Administration examination is offered in January and May/June each year. There was a candidate entry of approximately 17,800 in May/June 2010. Seventy-eight per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I – III. The mean score for the examination was 106.67 out of 200 marks.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Paper 01 consisted of 60 multiple choice items. The mean on the paper was 32.18 and the marks ranged from 0 to 56. Sixty-two per cent of the candidates earned 30 marks or more.

Paper 02 – Essay

This paper consisted of two sections. Section I comprised four compulsory questions and was based on Units I, II, III and V.

Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Units VII, VIII, IX, X, and XI. Candidates were required to answer two questions from Section II. The mean on the paper was 43.03 out of a possible 90 marks. Approximately 47 per cent of candidates earned at least half of the maximum mark on this paper.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to the School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This paper targeted candidates who were registered in private institutions and would not have completed the School-Based Assessment. The paper tested candidates' ability to use their personal experiences on routine office activities acquired through observation, or as employees in an actual office. The paper consisted of ten structured questions based on a case study. For this examination, the case focused on Units II, III, IV and V of the syllabus.

The mean on the paper was 22.64 out of a possible 50 marks. Approximately 40 cent of the candidates earned at least half of the maximum mark on this paper.

Paper 02 – Essay

Section I - Compulsory Questions

Question 1

This question tested Module I (Objectives 1 (b) and 5 (a-f)).

In Part (a) (i), candidates were asked to identify three channels, other than the consumer, that a manufacturer or producer may use to distribute his goods and services. This was worth 3 marks. For Part (a) (ii), candidates were required to state two roles that the office should perform in the exchange of goods and services. Most candidates responded competently. It was worth 2 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were required to complete the organization chart that was provided to show the positions for general manager, secretary and administrative assistant. This part of the question which was worth 2 marks was answered satisfactorily.

Part (c) of the question was based on a short scenario. Candidates were to state two ways in which the applicant could contribute to efficiency in the organization by her use of literacy, word processing, time management and problem-solving skills. Many candidates provided definitions for these terms and did not indicate how they contributed to the efficiency of the organization.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 6.45.

Question 2

This question tested Module II (Objectives 6 (a-g) and 8).

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to state three techniques that an employee should display in answering the company's telephone. Candidates' misinterpretation of this question resulted in their provision of examples instead of techniques. This was worth 3 marks. For Part (a) (ii), candidates were expected to list three types of information that may be found in the telephone directory. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were to state one reason why knowledge of time zones is important in business. This was worth 1 mark.

Part (b) (ii) asked candidates to copy the table with named countries and the number of hours that they were either behind or ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). They were then required to calculate the time for the three countries and indicate the time using the 12-hour clock. Some candidates miscalculated while others did not write the time in its correct format to include 'a.m.' or 'p.m.'. This was worth 3 marks.

For part (b) (iii), candidates were to convert time provided in the 12-hour clock format the 24-hour clock format. The performance of candidates indicated that they were challenged with calculating time and its conversion to the 24-hour clock. Some incorrect responses included the use of 'a.m.' or 'p.m' when they should have stated 'hours'. This was worth 5 marks.

Overall performance on this question was satisfactory. The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 7.50.

Question 3

This question tested Module III (Objectives 1 (i)(b), (iii) and 2 (a)).

In Part (a) (i), candidates were asked to state two reasons for preserving records in a business. This was worth 2 marks. For Part (a), (ii), candidates were required to identify two means by which data may be preserved. It was worth 2 marks.

For Part (a) (iii), candidates were to provide one task for each of the three duties that the records management clerk is expected to perform. This was worth 3 marks. This part of the question presented the most difficulty to candidates who defined the terms instead of providing tasks.

Part (b), asked candidates to arrange a list of names in an alphabetical filing system. The names were similar in their spelling and filing arrangement. This factor proved challenging for some candidates who were unable to use the specific rules that applied to the alphabetic placement. Many candidates were able to obtain partial marks for segments of the list that were correctly ordered.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 9.49.

Question 4

This question tested Module V (Objectives 1 (a, g), 5 (d) and Module II (Objective 3 (b))).

In Part (a) (i), candidates were asked to state one follow-up activity of a meeting that should be performed by the chairperson. This was worth 1 mark. In Part (a) (ii), candidates were required to state three reasons for sending copies of minutes of the previous meeting to members ahead of the next meeting day. This was worth 3 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were required to list three items of business that may be included on the agenda of a meeting. It was worth 3 marks.

For Part (c), candidates were to draft a memo; for the general manager's signature, to all members of staff, to explain the problem of dwindling attendance at meetings. In addition, candidates were to suggest four actions that can be taken to deal with the problem.

Part (b) was widely known and candidates offered many correct responses. However, for Part (c), many candidates wrote letters instead of memos. They disregarded the instruction to prepare a draft to be signed by the general manager and instead advanced information as if they had the final word, while offering very severe penalties that were outside of accepted labour practices.

The marks for this question ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 5.07.

Question 5

This question, which was the most popular of the options in Section II, tested Module VII (Objective No.1) and Module IX (Objectives 3 and 4).

In Part (a) (i), candidates were required to state two reasons for the conduct of an induction programme by the human resource management office. Many candidates offered responses that did not reflect the requirements of an induction programme. This was worth 2 marks.

In Part (a) (ii), candidates were to state two purposes for appraising employees in an organization. This was worth 2 marks.

For Part (b), candidates were required to identify two duties of the purchasing clerk. This segment of the question was well done by the majority of candidates. It was worth 2 marks.

For Part (c) (i), candidates were to use the form provided to complete a purchase requisition. This was worth 5 marks. In Part (c) (ii) candidates were to complete the order form provided. This was worth 4 marks.

The performance of candidates on this question was generally good. The marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 8.80.

Question 6

This question tested Module VIII (Objectives 2 and 9).

For Part (a) (i), candidates were asked to list three items of information that the accounts clerk may place on an employee's Pay Advice. It was worth 3 marks. In Part (a) (ii), candidates were required to state three reasons usually considered for paying an employee by cheque. This was worth 3 marks.

In Part (b), candidates were asked to use the form provided to record transactions of the Petty Cash Book, balance the book and restore the Imprest. Common challenges for candidates were recording transactions under the appropriate headings and restoring the Imprest.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 7.98.

Question 7

This question tested Module X (Objectives 2, 3 and 4).

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to state one function each of the fax machine, computer and answering machine as used in the sales and marketing department. It was worth 3 marks.

In Part (a) (ii), candidates were to identify three machines used in the sales office, apart from those named in (a) (i). This was worth 3 marks.

In Part (b), candidates were presented with questions based on a scenario and were asked to use the form provided to prepare an invoice to reflect the given sales transaction. This was worth 5 marks. In (ii), they were expected to calculate the cash discount if the account is paid up within 20 days, while in (iii) they were to calculate the payment that was required if the bill is settled with a late fee in effect. In both instances, the questions were worth 2 marks each.

The question requested that candidates show all working and many candidates did not adhere to this request. As a result, candidates who made errors in the final calculation could not be given partial credit. This segment of the question proved very challenging for some candidates.

The marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 6.03.

Question 8

This question, which was the least popular of those in Section II, tested Module X (Objectives 1 and 2).

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to list three specific duties performed by a clerk in a factory office. It was worth 3 marks. In Part (a) (ii), candidates were to state three ways in which a factory office can ensure that goods are completed on schedule. This was worth 3 marks.

In Part (b), candidates were provided with a flow chart that showed the movement of documents between the factory office and the despatch and transport office. In Part (i), they were expected to identify four documents that move in both directions between the factory office and the despatch and transport office. This was worth 4 marks.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were to state three ways in which the factory office and the despatch and transport office may depend on each other for the efficient operation of a business. This part was worth 3 marks and offered the most challenge to candidates who responded to this question. Many candidates provided the same response for each instance.

In Part (b) (iii), candidates were to explain two problems that may arise if both departments are unable to coordinate their activities. This was worth 2 marks.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 3.89.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment (SBA)

The case discussed a firm of young attorneys and its office staff. The key clerical positions included that of the receptionist/telephonist and the administrative assistant. The receptionist/telephonist was overwhelmed by her duties and asked management for assistance. The case and questions introduced a variety of prevailing situations that occur. It challenged candidates to offer reasonable and workable solutions to these issues in an analytic manner.

The overall performance of candidates on this paper was unsatisfactory. The mean was 22.64 with total marks obtained ranging between 1 and 40 out of a maximum of 50.

Question 1

This question tested Module IV (Objective 4 (a)) and Module II (Objective 2 (e)). It required candidates to state four procedures that must be followed by the receptionist when performing each of the duties of maintaining a tickler file and receiving parcels. This question was worth 8 marks.

Many responses indicated that candidates were unaware of the tickler file and how it was to be maintained. However, they provided more appropriate information on receiving parcels and were able to obtain more marks for this part of the question.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 8 and the mean was 2.35.

Question 2

This question tested Module IV (Objective 2 (c)).

An outline of a reception register was provided for candidates to complete the headings and enter details of callers in the order in which they visited the firm, based on the details given. Candidates were also instructed to use the 24-hour clock to record the times. This was worth 5 marks.

The responses of candidates who were unable to gain marks included instances where they did not follow instructions or neglected to insert accurate information.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 5 and the mean was 2.27.

Question 3

This question tested Module IV (Objective 1 (a)). It asked candidates to state three ways in which a trainee receptionist could perform her duties in a manner that would maintain a good relationship between the organization and members of the public. This was worth 3 marks.

The majority of candidates offered appropriate responses to this question.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 1 to 3 and the mean was 1.08.

Question 4

This question tested Module IV (Objective 3 (a)). Candidates were asked to complete the appointment book provided with details of visits made by specific individuals at stated times. This was worth 3 marks.

In some instances, information was misplaced in columns or important information was not copied accurately, although provided in the question.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 1 to 3 and the mean was 1.80.

Question 5

This question tested Module IV (Objective 2 (ii) (b, c, d)). It required candidates to state one way in which the receptionist would demonstrate qualities of discretion, tact and initiative. It was worth 3 marks.

In instances where marks were not awarded, candidates were not aware of the meaning of the terms and as a result were unable to provide the required information.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 1 to 3 and the mean was 1.07.

Question 6

This question tested Module IV (Objective 2 (d)). A paragraph representing an extract from a telephone message was given and candidates were required to use the information to complete the telephone message form provided. Candidates responded satisfactorily to this question. It was worth 8 marks.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 1 to 8 and the mean was 4.27.

Question 7

This question tested Module IV (Objective 2 (a, d)). In Part (a), candidates were required to identify improper actions by the trainee receptionist in (i) receiving unexpected visitors and (ii) answering the telephone. This was worth 4 marks.

In Part (b), candidates were required to suggest proper procedures to correct the actions identified in Part (a). This was worth 4 marks.

In some instances, the question was misinterpreted. However, the majority of candidates were able to provide appropriately worded responses.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 8 and the mean was 4.24.

Question 8

This question tested Module IV (Objective 2 (f)). It provided a drawing of a reception area that was in disarray. Candidates were asked to recommend five ways in which the reception area could be improved to make it more comfortable and attractive to visitors. This was worth 5 marks.

The majority of candidates were able to provide satisfactory responses to the question.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 1 to 5 and the mean was 3.33.

Question 9

This question tested Module IV (Objective 2 (f)). It asked candidates to offer suggestions for arrangements that should be put in place the day before a meeting. It was worth 4 marks.

In general, meaningful responses were provided for this question. In other instances, some candidates misinterpreted the question and indicated information that did not pertain to preparation for a meeting and the actions to be taken.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 1 to 4 and the mean was 2.21.

Question 10

This question tested Module IV (Objective 2 (b)). It asked candidates to recommend the correct way to introduce a visitor. It was worth 3 marks.

The content required to respond to this question was not well known, as the protocol of making introductions was not correctly stated.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 3 and the mean was 0.50.

Paper 03/1 – School-Based Assessment (SBA)

The SBA component of the Office Administration Syllabus is designed to give candidates an opportunity to apply skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes acquired in Office Administration classes during the secondary school experience. This is demonstrated through the compilation of a project which synthesizes skills in letter writing, structuring a questionnaire, developing a work plan, observing equipment employed in business, researching information by means of reading, or through interviews and analysing data obtained noting the strengths, weaknesses and limitations. This information is then compiled in a report complete with title page, table of contents and bibliography.

Title Page

In general, candidates were able to present the Title Page with the required information such as the names of the teacher, school, candidate, examination body and the subject under examination.

Table of Contents

Most candidates displayed sections, as detailed in the marking scheme, in the left-hand column, with page numbers aligned in the right-hand column. Very few candidates used leader dots to align the content with the page numbers.

Project Title

The topics selected were often not carefully structured, with the result that some were too broad and, in a few cases, outside the scope of the syllabus. Teachers are reminded that this topic must be related to the objectives in the syllabus and framed in a manner to indicate that the candidate is examining or researching some specific area which has some educational or social value from which he or she will learn. The topics should not be too broadly stated, thus creating an overwhelming workload for the candidate.

Aims

The aims must be stated clearly. They must state precisely what the candidate is setting out to do. Many candidates failed to state these in a manner which limited them to the title of the project.

Function

This should be the function of the department under observation as it relates to the title of the project. Many candidates failed in this aspect of the project.

Correspondence

Many candidates failed to follow the general principles of letter writing. This should be a letter composed by the candidates seeking permission to carry out the research. In instances where the letter is written as a form letter by the school, candidates are required to write their own letter stating the objective to be achieved by the individual researcher. Attention must be paid to the format of the letter: return address, date, addressee, salutation and complimentary close, paragraphing, grammar and enclosure. The letter should be signed by the candidate.

Methodology

Apart from the specimen, candidates are required to submit particulars of why that instrument was chosen instead of some other method of gathering information for the project. They are also required to explain how they used the instrument. This section was poorly done by most candidates as they failed to justify use of the instrument.

Questions

This was done satisfactorily by most candidates. However, a few candidates did not submit relevant questions. The questions were often taken from the questionnaire.

Schedule of Activities

Most candidates submitted a schedule of activities, listed the sequence as they progressed through the research and made appropriate comments. In some cases, it was evident that candidates were unsure of what was required of them and listed less than the minimum required activities.

Regulations/Policies/Legislation

Evidence of a piece of legislation is designed to sensitize candidates to an awareness of the laws governing the workplace. It would be useful therefore if they obtained a copy of the relevant legislation or make reference to the specific regulation and what it is intended to do. The same would apply to the policies of the organization and rules relating to employees which the candidate may have been subject to.

A policy is a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve goals. Policy may also refer to important organizational decisions such as spending priorities and choosing among them on the basis of the impact they will have. There may be management, financial and administrative policies designed to reach explicit goals. For example, an organization may accept a legal and moral obligation to ensure that staff are not subjected to sex discrimination through harassment, bullying or workplace violence by ensuring that in the event of alleged discrimination, harassment, bullying or workplace violence, a staff member, or his/her representative, may refer the matter to the Human Resource Manager or notify a union representative.

Legislation or statutory law is law which has been enacted by the governing body and actively regulates the operation of the business. Examples are the Company Act, Shop and Factory Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act.

Staff Rules

These rules are generally established by management and apply to all staff or categories of staff, except where specifically provided, and may include the candidate who is doing the research. An example with regard to employees in a legal firm: 'Employees shall not solicit, accept or agree to accept any gifts or gratuities from persons having or likely to have any official transaction.'

Presentation

Whereas some candidates presented a well written report, many wrote brief notes on the findings. Many candidates were not able to state what they had accomplished by doing the research. They seemed able to express the challenges they encountered but were unable to do the same with the problem-solving strategy used to overcome the challenges.

Business Forms

The business form used in the project must be related to the business under consideration. Some candidates simply included forms that had no relevance to what they set out to do. The forms and the title must be related.

Bibliography

Most candidates were unable to obtain the maximum marks allotted for this section as they did not complete the listing of resources used or Internet sites referenced. Although some candidates may not have access to all types of media, the medium used should be stated.

Office Equipment

As required by the mark scheme, the equipment stated in the SBA must be equipment observed or used in the business studied. Candidates are required to list the equipment, state its use, and its suitability for the specific function in the business under consideration. Most candidates referred to the equipment employed by them in the preparation of the SBA.

It is evident that there are some teachers who are not familiar with the revised mark scheme as the projects were not in compliance with the current requirements. In a few instances, schools submitted SBAs that were based on the 2004 syllabus and mark scheme.

Those candidates who scored high in the SBA exhibited extensive research skills on the topic they had selected, whereas those who obtained lower marks, generally did not comply with the requirements of the syllabus.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO TEACHERS

1. Create a glossary of commonly used terms and ensure that all students are familiar with these terms.
2. Expose students to past examination papers and case studies.
3. Prepare sample letters for students that apply to a variety of situations.
4. Plan activities which will assist in the development of students' observation and research skills.
5. Increase opportunities for practice in completing forms, writing letters and memos, and responding to situational type questions.
6. Include exercises that require numerical computations in the instructional process.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

JANUARY 2011

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates' performance in the January 2011 Office Administration sitting was satisfactory and revealed that most candidates were prepared for the examination, notwithstanding some areas of weakness. This year, 1,233 candidates sat the examination compared with the January 2010 sitting where approximately 1,682 candidates wrote the examination. Seventy-seven per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I–III. The mean score for the examination was 98.98 out of 200 marks.

Three papers were offered at the General Proficiency Level to ensure broad coverage of the syllabus, with objectives tested from all of the modules. More specific comments will be addressed separately under each paper.

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to the School Based Assessment (SBA)

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Paper 01 consisted of 60 multiple-choice items. The overall mean was 34.76 compared with 33.86 for January 2010. Marks ranged from 13 to 55 out of a maximum 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. These questions were attempted by the majority of candidates.

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 in this section of the paper. Candidates were required to answer two questions from Section II. The overall mean for this paper was 33.82 compared with 34.00 in 2010. Marks ranged from 1 to 67 out of a maximum of 90. There are some topics however, that continue to pose difficulty to candidates and this is reflected in their overall performance.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This paper took the form of a written examination that targeted private candidates who would not have had the opportunity to complete SBA projects. The paper was designed to test candidates' ability to use their personal experiences of routine office activities acquired through observation or from doing the actual office tasks as a real employee. The paper consisted of ten structured questions based on a case study. For this examination, the case focused on Unit XII of the syllabus.

In this paper, candidates' performance improved significantly in some areas over that of the 2010 examination. The overall mean for this paper was 30.08 compared to 14.90 in 2010. Marks ranged from 2 to 46 out of a maximum of 50.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Short Answer

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

Question 1

This question tested Module I, Objective 1 (c), Objective 2 (a) and Objective 5.

For Part (a), which was worth three marks, candidates were required to list three activities performed in the office that relate to processing information. For the most part, candidates were able to list at least two activities and gave responses such as collecting/sourcing information from files, libraries; extracting or pulling out relevant data; sorting; and distributing or routing of information to those needing the information.

For Part (b), candidates were required to state two differences between a small company and a large company with respect to: (i) employees and (ii) structure. Each of these parts was worth two marks. Part (b) was generally well done by the candidates who performed well in Part (a). Candidates gave a wide range of responses such as space, equipment, furnishings and technology considerations, as well as salaries, working conditions, specializations and workload with regard to employee differences; while for differences in structure, candidates' responses included type of organizational structure, communication channels used, strategic plans, goals, vision and mission.

In Part (c), candidates were presented with the following scenario: "As an employee you believe that your co-workers must promote positive relationships with each other in the workplace". Candidates were required to copy a table with specific headings: Key Positive Attitudes, Employee's Actions/Demonstrations, and Employer's Actions/Demonstrations — in their answer booklets and for each positive attitude listed, they were to state one appropriate action both by the employee and the employer that would promote the attitude. This was worth eight marks.

This part of the question was somewhat challenging to some candidates who repeated the same responses for both the employee's and employer's actions. However, some candidates were able to express appropriate actions/demonstrations to indicate clear differences.

Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 5.24.

Question 2

This question tested Module II (Objective 1, Objective 6 (c) and Objective 3 (b)).

For Part (a), which was worth three marks, candidates were required to state three uses of the Internet.

This part of the question was generally well done by candidates who gave responses such as accessing electronic mail, research purposes, intranet, e-commerce, entertainment, job search, communication and e-learning.

For Part (b), candidates were to list four items of information that should be included on a telephone message form. This was worth four marks.

Most candidates were able to list correctly the required items of information such as date/time the call was received; name of person for whom the message was intended, summary of the message and the person who took the message.

Part (c) related a case where some employees at the workplace had been abusing the use of cellular telephones during working hours. As a result, policy guidelines regarding the use of cellular phones had been developed. Candidates were required to draft a memorandum to inform staff of the plan to introduce new policies on the use of cellular telephones during working hours. The memorandum should also include three ways in which cellular telephones may be used inappropriately by employees in the workplace. In addition, candidates were required to state one disadvantage of using cellular telephones during working hours. Part (c) was worth eight marks.

Most candidates were able to draft the memo correctly by indicating the different headings and inserting relevant information regarding ways in which cellular telephones are inappropriately used. These include: when using office equipment, uncontrolled use during meetings, untimely sending of text messages, and use in the presence of customers.

Most candidates scored the point for stating a disadvantage of using cellular telephones during working hours by including responses such as interrupts workflow, distracts individuals, can contribute to accidents and loss of productivity.

Overall performance on this question was satisfactory. Marks obtained ranged from 0 to 15 with a mean of 9.27.

Question 3

This question tested Module III (Objectives 2, 4 and 6).

Part (a) (i) tested candidates' understanding of the term 'indexing' as it is used in records management. It was worth two marks.

Although many candidates attempted this part of the question, generally, it was not well done. The question specifically asked candidates to state the meaning of the term as it is used in records management, but it appeared that the latter part of the instruction was ignored as many candidates defined indexing with reference to a list at the end of a book or as an indicator of a trend.

Correct responses such as ‘the process of determining the various ways that attention is drawn to brief information’, ‘how data are organized to be used in the order of filing’, ‘making a decision on the name by which correspondence will most likely be requested from files’, ‘identifying where to file or find information’, were invariably not forthcoming from candidates.

In Part (a) (ii), worth two marks, candidates were required to state two reasons for cross-referencing a name. In most instances, candidates were able to state one reason; the most frequent responses being a name change as a result of marriage or a change in company name. Other appropriate, expected responses include: ‘doubt about where to place information’, ‘when the content of two files are related’, and ‘when information must be placed in more than one place’.

For Part (b), candidates were required to list three regulations that relate to access and retention of documents. This part of the question, worth three marks, posed a great deal of difficulty for most candidates. In a few instances, candidates gave correct responses such as ‘the need for authorization’, ‘signature’, ‘length of retention’, while the majority of them failed to list regulations related to limitations on the right of access, infringement of copyright, defamation, parliamentary privilege and breach of confidence.

In Part (c) (i), worth four marks, candidates were presented with a case in which they were clerks with Prime Real Estate Ltd which had recently merged with two other companies. At that company, a departmental filing system was used. However, the merged company decided to use a centralized filing system. Candidates were required to identify four changes that the clerk must make to facilitate the use of the centralized filing system.

Some candidates interpreted the question to mean the changes that the company should make instead of the changes that the clerk should make to facilitate the use of the centralized filing system. Correct responses such as ‘receive training’, ‘be aware of new equipment and technologies’, ‘more effective management of times so as to meet deadlines for returning files’, ‘be able to apply changes to the requirements of your specific job/tasks’, ‘change attitudes and habits to accommodate new procedures’, were hardly considered by candidates.

In Part (c) (ii), candidates were required to state four activities that management should undertake to ensure that the change from a departmental to a centralized filing system was successful. This part of the question was worth four marks.

In many instances, candidates repeated the responses given in Part (c) (i) for Part (c) (ii) and hence, failed to score optimal marks. Correct responses should have included:

- selecting an appropriate system to meet organization's needs
- formulating policy and communicating to staff
- training staff to use and maintain system
- standardizing systems throughout the organization,
- evaluating the system and its usability

Overall, performance on this question was unsatisfactory. The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 2.93.

Question 4

This question tested Module V, Objective 1 and Module VI, Objective 1 (b).

Part (a) (i) of this question, worth one mark, required candidates to define the term 'quorum'.

In most instances, candidates gave the correct definition, 'the minimum number of persons who must be present for a meeting to be convened'.

In Part (a) (ii), candidates were required to state four legal requirements of an Annual General Meeting. Part (a) (ii) was worth 4 marks.

This section of the question was satisfactorily done by most candidates who gave correct responses such as:

- meeting must be held once every year
- there must be a quorum in order to conduct the meeting
- annual reports must be tabled
- election of officers must take place
- dividends are declared

For Part (a) (iii), candidates were required to list two ways in which the Chairman's Agenda is different from the General Agenda. Part (a) (iii) was worth two marks.

In most instances, candidates were able to state at least one difference between the two types of agenda by responding that adequate space is left on the right hand side of the chairman's agenda for notations. Other differences such as 'last minute information (e.g. apologies) is obtained', and 'more detailed information about agenda items to be raised', were not given by the candidates.

Part (b), worth eight marks, instructed candidates to use the information provided in an electronic mail to prepare an itinerary for Mr Sant, using the 24-hour clock.

This part of the question was satisfactorily done, although some candidates failed to head up and use the correct format for an itinerary by incorporating the name of the document

(itinerary), for the named person, the specified period and what the traveller had to do during the period.

Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 4.66.

Question 5

This question tested Module VII, Objective 1 (c, h), Module VIII, Objective 1 and Module X, Objective 4.

In Part (a) (i), candidates were asked to state three responsibilities of the human resource department with regard to deployment. This was worth three marks.

In many instances, candidates stated the responsibilities of the human resource department generally, with scant regard to deployment. As a result, responses such as ‘to assess the needs of the department’, ‘to determine number of employees required’, ‘to assess skills and work experiences of workers’, and ‘to evaluate attitudes and qualifications of employees’, were hardly given.

Part (a) (ii) of the question, worth three marks, required candidates to state three items of information that the human resource department must obtain from other departments to develop a job description.

Responses such as ‘qualifications’, ‘skills’, ‘attitudes’, ‘persons to whom the employee is directly responsible’, ‘salary paid’, ‘grade levels’ and ‘job titles’, indicated that many candidates possessed fairly good mastery of the content in this area.

In Part (b) (i), candidates were presented with a scenario about a customer making credit purchases for the first time. The goods to be purchased were valued at \$8,500.00 and the terms of payment were 2 per cent, net 15 days. Candidates were asked to assume that they were working in the accounts department of the company and were required to outline three actions that the company should take before granting credit facilities to the customer. Part (b) (i) was worth three marks.

Most candidates’ responses indicated that they possessed a fairly good command of knowledge in the area. Correct statements included ‘determining Ryce’s credit worthiness or ability to pay’, ‘investigating the customer’s credit history’, ‘checking the order to determine if it was within the value of credit allowed to customers’, and ‘instructing the relevant department to process the credit facility’.

In Part (b) (ii), worth three marks, candidates were asked to write three recommendations to deal with delinquent debtors.

This part of the question was satisfactorily handled by most candidates who gave recommendations such as ‘send reminder letter’, ‘stop credit’, ‘resort to legal action’ and ‘repossess goods’.

In Part (b) (iii), which was worth two marks, candidates were instructed that the customer in Part (b) (i) repaid the loan within eight days and were asked to calculate the final payment by showing all working.

Many candidates calculated the correct amount of \$8,330.00 that the customer should pay.

For Part (b) (iv), candidates were asked to write a justification indicating whether the customer was entitled to a discount. Part (b) (iv) was worth one mark.

Many candidates correctly reasoned that the customer was entitled to a discount of 2 per cent for repayment of credit granted before the 15 days limit.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 5.61.

Question 6

Question 6 tested Module IX, Objective 5 and Module VIII, Objective 3 (c).

In Part (a) (i), which was worth three marks, candidates were asked to state three reasons why stock control is important to a company.

This part of the question was answered satisfactorily by many candidates whose responses included 'to determine purchasing quantities', 'availability of space for storage', 'stock movement', 'usage patterns' and 're-order levels'.

Part (a) (ii) required candidates to identify three factors that would influence a company's decision on what items to stock. It was worth three marks. Correct responses given by candidates included 'usage', 'market demand and supply', 'price', 'time of delivery', 'climatic needs' and 'nature and size of business'.

In Part (b), which was worth nine marks, candidates were asked to assume that they worked in the accounts department of Fores Construction Company. As employees, one of the duties included the preparation of statements of accounts. Candidates were presented with the account of Charters Equipment of 36 Hades Park, Anguilla, which showed three transactions. The statement number was 5732 and the brought forward balance on December 02 was \$655.25. Candidates were to be asked use the form provided to prepare a statement of accounts to be sent to Charters Equipment Company.

This was the most popular of the option questions and most candidates who attempted it performed satisfactorily. The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15, with a mean of 6.83.

Question 7

This question tested Module X, Objective 2, Module IX, Objective 3 and Module X, Objective 3 (d).

In Part (a), which was worth three marks, candidates were required to state three duties that may be required of a clerk in the sales department when dealing with customers.

This part of the question was satisfactorily done by those candidates who gave correct responses such as 'supply information' 'answer queries', 'follow up orders', 'liaise with other departments' and 'distribute brochures and pricelists'.

Part (b), which was worth three marks, required candidates to list three steps in the purchasing procedure. This part of the question was unsatisfactorily done as many candidates failed to produce correct responses such as 'general enquiries', 'obtaining price quotations and transportation information', 'following up on orders' and 'obtaining departmental requisition'.

For Part (c) (i), candidates were presented with a scenario where suppliers of office equipment were to be invited to submit tenders for a photocopy machine to the company in which they are employed. The equipment should have cutting edge technology in order to meet the needs of the marketing department. Candidates were required to draft the request for tenders that would be sent out to suppliers. They were asked to include three main components of the tender.

Part (c) (i) was worth four marks.

Generally, this part of the question was not done satisfactorily. Candidates failed to include three main components such as 'name of company', 'items/goods required', 'means by which tender should be presented', 'period of tender' and 'terms and conditions of tender'. As an alternative, candidates' responses which mentioned functions of the photocopier such as 'colour', 'speed', 'size', multi-functionality, 'durability' and 'cost' were accepted as well.

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were asked to assume that they were assisting the sales manager in evaluating the tenders received from suppliers and in designing a checklist that would help identify the major features of the photocopy machine. Candidates were asked to design a checklist identifying four features of the photocopy machine that would meet the needs of the marketing department. Part (c) (ii) was worth five marks.

Candidates performed satisfactorily in this section, providing a checklist which included acceptable features of the photocopy machine such as 'sort and staple', 'copy two and multiple sides', 'fast and easy to operate' 'produce colour and black and white copies', 'durable and able to withstand use from many users' and 'easily serviceable'.

Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 5.36.

Question 8

This question tested Module XI, Objective 2 (a), Module XI, Objective 3 (b, c) and Module XI Objective 2 (c, d).

In Part (a), which was worth two marks, candidates were required to state two tasks performed by a clerk in the factory office in the preparation of a shift roster.

For this part of the question, some candidates stated those tasks that were generally performed in the factory office with little attention paid to the preparation of a shift roster. Hence, correct responses such as ‘obtain schedule of production from files/production department’, ‘retrieve maintenance and repair schedules’, ‘list incoming orders’ and ‘prepare the draft/final copy of the roster’ were seldom provided.

In Part (b), candidates were required to state two uses each for the (i) destination sheet and (ii) delivery note. This part of the question was worth four marks.

This part of the question was satisfactorily attempted by candidates. They indicated uses of the destination sheet such as ‘informs the driver of name and address of the customer’, ‘assists driver in planning his trip route’, and ‘customers sign the appropriate section when goods are received as proof of receipt’. Correct responses for the uses of the delivery note included: ‘note accompanies goods being delivered to customer’, ‘verification document’ and ‘purchaser checks goods against delivery note, and if correct, signs a copy for the driver’.

In Part (c) (i), candidates were presented with a scenario where they were to assume that they worked in the production department of the Fashion Statement Company, 14 Chaud Place, Bridgetown, Barbados. The Production Manager, Mr Chris Welsh, had left a note indicating that it was time to re-order production forms from the printers. Candidates were required to prepare a draft form to include specified headings with adequate space for inserting information. Part (c) (i) was worth five marks.

This part of the question was completed satisfactorily. In their design, most candidates included the name of the form and all headings that were required.

For Part (c) (ii), which was worth four marks, candidates were required to use the form they designed to record Production Order No. 56/2011, received by the company for 1,000 ladies straw hats. The form should be signed by Mr Welsh, the production manager.

Candidates were able to use the form they designed to record the appropriate information and indicated the signature of Mr Welsh.

Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15, with a mean of 7.04.

Paper 03/2 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment

A short case was provided and candidates were required to read and respond to ten structured questions. This paper was worth 50 marks. The mean for this paper was 30.08.

The Case

The case focused on a thriving medium-sized construction company, ACME Limited. The company which has been in existence for the past 20 years needs to expand its operations to cope with the current construction boom at its peak in the country. The case dealt with the issues surrounding the management procedures that must be put in place to effectively handle the hiring of additional full-time staff for the office and for the various work sites.

Question 1

This question tested Module XII (Objective 1 (a, b, c)). Candidates were asked to discuss why the three suggested methods, namely, electronic media, newspapers and employment agencies would be effective methods of advertising for the new staff. In addition, candidates were asked to state two advantages of using each of these three methods. This question was worth six marks and had a mean of 3.41.

Candidates gave appropriate responses for the use of the electronic media such as 'reaches a large audience', 'fast' and 'can be easily updated'. For the newspaper advertisement, candidates noted that this method is less expensive', 'there is a permanent record' and 'job information is current'. Correct advantages of the employment agencies included that 'they act for employers in seeking applications for job vacancies' and that the agencies aid employers by 'testing and screening applicants' and 'sourcing qualified applicants for the position'.

Question 2

This question tested Module XII, Objective 2 (c). Candidates were asked to explain, giving two reasons for each, why a potential applicant who had concerns about (i) hours that she may be required to work and (ii) the qualifications needed for the post should seriously consider these concerns before applying for a position at the company. This question was worth four marks. The mean was 2.52.

In terms of hours required to work, candidates presented responses such as 'may impact on family responsibilities', 'may impact on other responsibilities such as study or hobbies', or 'may prevent applicant from working a shift system, if required'. With respect to the qualifications needed, candidates provided responses that the applicant should consider whether she 'is qualified for the position', 'overqualified' and that she also needs to consider the 'competitiveness of the field'.

Question 3

This question tested Module XII, Objective 3 (c). Candidates were presented with an advertisement which appeared in the local newspaper. They were required to apply for the position in response to the job advertisement by writing a cover letter to ACME Limited that would accompany the résumé. This question was worth six marks. The mean was 2.90.

Candidates responded favourably to this question except in some instances where the date and the inside address were omitted from the letter. In addition, the complimentary close did not always match the salutation. Candidates should bear in mind that once a name is used, for example, 'Dear Mr Brown', then the complimentary close should end with 'Yours sincerely'. When the salutation is not personal, for example, The Resource Manager, the complimentary close can be 'Yours faithfully', 'Yours truly'. In addition, some candidates failed to include the enclosure/attachment notation.

Question 4

This question tested Module XII, Objective 3. This question presented candidates with an extract of personal information on an applicant and is completing her résumé. They were required to suggest a layout for the résumé, making sure to include the appropriate headings and related details. This question was worth ten marks. The mean was 8.15.

Some candidates failed to include appropriate headings, for example, Personal Data/Information, Education, Work Experience and Extra-curricular activities/Hobbies. In some instances, the layout was not appropriate.

Question 5

This question tested Module XII, Objective 5. In this question, candidates were informed that the applicant had submitted her application and had been selected to attend an interview. They were asked to provide three suggestions that would assist her in preparing for the interview. This question was worth three marks. The mean was 1.81.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question. Correct recommendations given included:

- find out as much as possible about the organization
- find out where the interview is taking place and how to get there in good time
- take special care with your appearance, making sure you are tidy
- carry along copies of essential documents/portfolio

Question 6

This question tested Module XII, Objective 5 (d). In this question candidates were asked to help the applicant in preparing for the interview by suggesting one likely response to each of three questions: 'Why do you want to work with the company?', 'Why do you think you are suitable for the position?' and 'What are your long-term goals?' This question was worth three marks. The mean was 2.56.

Most candidates gave appropriate responses to the questions such as: “It fulfils my personal values/interests/beliefs”; “I possess the relevant qualifications/experience” and “My goal is to continue to improve my skills and qualifications”.

Question 7

This question tested Module XII, Objective 5. Candidates were required to write three questions that the applicant could ask the interviewer, at the interview. Generally, candidates performed satisfactorily in this question and provided appropriate responses such as:

- What are the opportunities for training and professional development?
- What are the fringe benefits?
- How soon can I expect to hear from you if I am selected for the job?
- What is the basis for salary review?

This question was worth three marks. The mean was 2.09.

Question 8

This question tested Module XII, Objective 4 (c). Candidates were informed that the applicant had received a letter offering her a job as a clerk in the human resource department. They were required to complete the letter of acceptance. This question was worth five marks. The mean was 2.80.

Some candidates who attempted this question failed to include important elements in the letter of acceptance such as:

- Thank the company for the opportunity to join staff
- Indicate date of letter or some reference
- Confirm date to start employment
- Confirm salary/benefits

Question 9

This question tested Module XII, Objective 6. Candidates were informed that on the first day at the office, the new employee will have to attend an orientation session to be briefed on her duties and responsibilities. Candidates were required to draft an email to the new employee from the human resource officer, inviting her to attend the session and highlighting three other pieces of information that will be discussed during the orientation and induction session.

This question was unsatisfactorily done as some candidates failed to include:

- An appropriate greeting and closing
- Details of time and place of the orientation

- Activities to be discussed such as, conditions of service, rules and procedures of the organization, introduction to other employees, and grievance and disciplinary procedures

This question was worth five marks. The mean was 1.85.

Question 10

This question tested Module XII, Objective 6 (c). This question advised candidates that during orientation and induction, the new employee was informed that, as part of her duties, she would be responsible for handling confidential files. Candidates were required to write a response, on behalf of the new employee, to a colleague who had been asking her repeatedly to share information on other employees in the company. They were asked to provide reasons why the new employee should not engage in this practice.

In most instances, candidates gave at least two appropriate responses to this question. These included:

- Employers expect employees to keep company and client information confidential
- May result in job loss
- Employees with sensitive/confidential information should not gossip
- Breach of professionalism/work ethic

This question was worth five marks. The mean was 2.63.

The overall performance on this paper was satisfactory.

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

1. Candidates should acquire a personal copy of the syllabus and incorporate it in their examination preparation process.
2. Past papers can be of invaluable assistance in time management and preparation for the actual examination. Candidates should review past papers and practise formulating answers.
3. Greater emphasis must be placed on the 'newer' modules of the syllabus and content areas to promote a clear understanding of examination requirements and guidelines, in keeping with current trends and practices at the workplace.
4. Candidates must always be cognizant of the rules of grammar, spelling, structure and presentation in Office Administration activities and apply these appropriately.

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

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

MAY/JUNE 2011

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidate performance improved in June 2011. Eighty-eight per cent of candidates achieved Grades I–III compared with 71 per cent in 2010. The mean score for the examination was 118.65 out of 200 marks.

There were some encouraging responses to questions in all three papers of the General Proficiency examination. This revealed that candidates were prepared for the examination, notwithstanding some areas of weaknesses. These areas are addressed in the detailed comments on individual questions.

Paper 01	— Multiple Choice
Paper 02	— Short Answer
Paper 031	— School-Based Assessment (SBA)
Paper 032	— Alternative to School-Based Assessment (SBA)

The two profiles tested in the Paper 01 examination and used in the assessment of Office Administration are (i) Knowledge and Comprehension, and (ii) Application.

Candidates' performance on the 2011 paper showed an improvement over that of June 2010. The overall mean was 34.75 compared with 32.18 for July 2010. Marks ranged from 1 to 59 out of a maximum of 60.

Paper 02 also assessed Knowledge and Comprehension and Application of procedures and processes associated with specialized office activities and office routines.

This paper consisted of two sections. Section I comprised four compulsory questions covering Modules I–VI and Module XII. These questions were attempted by the majority of candidates.

Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Modules VII to 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. Therefore, candidates were asked to attempt a total of six questions from this paper. The overall mean for this paper was 50.32 compared with 43.03 in 2010. Marks ranged from 0 to 83 out of a maximum of 90. There are, however, some areas that continue to pose difficulty to candidates and this is reflected in their overall performance.

Paper 032 took the form of a written examination that targeted private candidates who would not have the opportunity to complete School-Based Assessment (SBA) projects as school candidates. The paper was designed to test 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 short essay-type questions, with sub-sections, based on a case study. For this examination, the case focused on Module II of the syllabus which covers communication.

It is noted that while some areas continue to pose a challenge to candidates, overall performance improved on this paper improved over that of the 2010 examination. The overall mean for this paper was 27.06 out of a maximum of 50, compared with 22.64 in 2010. Marks ranged from 0 to 47.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 — Short Answer

Question 1

The first part of the question tested candidates' knowledge of the requirements of the work environment.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to identify one other right included in the labour laws of any Caribbean country except the right to freedom of association and assembly. For the most part, candidates were unable to identify a labour law and confused labour laws with human rights issues. This part of the question was worth one mark.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were required to identify two desirable attitudes that employees should demonstrate in the workplace. This segment of the question was fairly well done. Part (a) (ii) was worth two marks.

Part (b) focused on procedures dealing with inactive files. Part (b) (i) required candidates to state one way in which a company may dispose of each of the following types of files: non-confidential and confidential.

Most candidates were able to identify shredding as a means of destroying confidential files, although many candidates also used this process for non-confidential files. This part of the question was worth two marks.

Part (b) (ii) required candidates to identify two types of files which are usually archived. Many candidates who attempted this section were unfamiliar with the term 'archived' and failed to give appropriate responses such as *non-active files* and *closed/dead files*. Part (b) (i) was worth two marks.

Part (a) tested candidates' knowledge of preparing follow-up letters. Candidates were required to write an appropriate follow-up letter to Mrs Penny Wise, the Director of the Human Resource Division, in response to a stated scenario. This section was satisfactorily done with some candidates obtaining maximum marks. In some cases though, candidates omitted the date from the letter, while others were not able to match the salutation to an appropriate complimentary close. This part of the question was worth eight marks.

Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 7.80.

Question 2

Part (a) of this question examined candidates' knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of a receptionist.

Part (a) (i) required candidates to state two practices which would assist in keeping the reception area tidy. Generally, candidates' performance on this section was unsatisfactory as they failed to give responses such as *stack newspapers/files/magazines neatly*, *pin notices on notice boards properly*, and *organize/arrange blinds/curtains/seating neatly*. It was worth two marks.

Part (a) (ii), required candidates to identify two items of information that may be found on a business card. Most candidates were able to score one of the two marks awarded in this section.

Part (a) (iii) required candidates to copy and complete a table given and to suggest professional alternatives for unprofessional responses used by a temporary receptionist. It was noted that many candidates retained the term *Hello* in Part (a) of the question, even though they continued the statement by stating a more appropriate greeting and announcing the name of the firm.

The use of the colloquialism, *eh*, in Part (c) was not understood by many candidates. Many of the candidates lost marks because they offered the wrong alternative. This was worth four marks.

Part (b) focused on the importance and use of reminder systems in the office. Part (b) (i) required candidates to provide three points describing how a tickler system works. In most instances, candidates gave a definition of the tickler system but were unable to state how it works. Very few candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of how the tickler system works for both reminder and follow-up. Correct response such as *reminder notes or documents are placed behind specific dates and months, daily checks must be made to determine whether the note or document should be acted upon or followed up, and if there has been no reply, the document is passed to the responsible party for action*, were not frequently provided by candidates.

Part (b) (ii) required candidates to copy a diary sheet in their answer booklet and complete it using the information given. Candidates performed satisfactorily with the majority of them scoring maximum marks or three of the four marks allotted to this section.

Marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15 with a mean of 8.38.

Question 3

Part (a) examined the role and functions of the office, with respect to the production of goods and the collection and processing of data.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to explain the terms *collecting data*, *processing data*, and *producing goods*.

The majority of candidates provided responses which reproduced the root of the questions and, therefore, were not explicit in their responses. In some instances, however, candidates could give clear explanation to the terms. This part of the question was worth three marks.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were required to differentiate between 'goods' and 'services'. For the most part, candidates demonstrated an understanding of both terms and supplied satisfactory responses. This was worth two marks.

For Part (a) (iii), candidates were required to state two reasons for preserving information in an organization. This section was handled well by candidates who were able to score the two marks allotted.

Part (b) focused on the desirable attitudes and attributes of office personnel as well as the importance of good relationships. For Part (b) (i), candidates were required to write a memo to be emailed to Mr Pryce, expressing their disappointment with his conduct at the workplace and stating the impact of his frequent lateness on the achievement of goals in the department.

This part of the question was satisfactorily done by most candidates. However, some candidates failed to utilize the correct format for writing a memo using the document name *Memo* and accompanying features such as *To*, *From*, *Date*, and *Subject*. Part (b) (i) was worth four marks.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were required to state two actions that as a supervisor, they should take, and two actions that Mr Pryce should take to improve the efficiency of the department. This section was fairly well done. Candidates were able to differentiate between the supervisor's role and the subordinate's role. This part of the question was worth four marks.

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 9.99.

Question 4

This question examined candidates' knowledge of channels of communication and communication formats commonly used in the office.

For Part (a), candidates were required to state one example of each of the following four methods of communication: (i) oral (ii) electronic (iii) visual and (iv) written.

This part of the question was handled well by most candidates who earned the maximum marks allotted. Part (a) was worth four marks.

For Part (b), candidates were asked to state three items of information that should be given to the hotel reservations clerk when making hotel reservations. Candidates were familiar with this aspect of the syllabus and gave favourable responses such as *name, address, and telephone number of person for whom the room is being reserved, type of room required: single, double or suite, length of planned stay, and date and time of arrival/departure*. Part (b) was worth three marks.

For Part (c) (i), candidates were given a message form on which they were required to record the relevant points of a given message. Most candidates were able to record the information on the form appropriately and scored maximum marks. However, some candidates failed to include all the details of the message. This part of the question was worth six marks.

In Part (c) (ii), candidates were required to state two actions that Ms Powell may take to ensure the accuracy of a telephone message. The majority of candidates responded satisfactorily to this part of the question which was worth two marks

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 11.22.

Question 5

This question examined candidates' knowledge of the duties of a clerk in the accounts office, the calculation of different types of discounts and the factors that contribute to employee turnover in an organization.

For Part (a), candidates were required to state two attributes of an accounts clerk. In some instances, candidates provided correct responses such as *accuracy/neatness/legibility, honesty, confidentiality, and reliability*. However, some candidates failed to distinguish between attributes and skills. This part of the question was worth two marks.

For Part (b), candidates were to state how the accounts office of a manufacturing firm interacts with the following offices: (i) factory, (ii) human resource, and (iii) transport.

In most instances, candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the named offices and their functions, but were unable to state effectively how the accounts office liaises with each of the named offices. Part (b) was worth three marks.

Parts (c) (i), (ii) and (iii) required candidates to calculate trade discounts and cash discounts (if paid within a specific time period). Most candidates demonstrated some level of competence in performing the required calculations. However, some candidates failed to carry out the tasks using a sequential approach and showing calculations. This part of the question was worth six marks.

Part (d) (i) required candidates to list one internal factor that may contribute to high labour turnover in an organization. Candidates seemed to have a good grasp of this aspect of the syllabus and supplied satisfactory responses such as *poor working conditions*, *low salary*, and *lack of training opportunities*.

Part (d) (ii) required candidates to list three measures that an employer may adopt to remedy a situation of high labour turnover. Candidates were able to satisfactorily list measures such as *improve working conditions*, *provide incentives*, *increase morale*, and *offer higher salaries*.

This question was, however, not a popular optional question. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 5.50.

Question 6

This question tested candidates' knowledge of the role and functions of the human resource department, with particular focus on appraisals, training and disciplinary procedures.

For Part (a), candidates were given two functions of the human resource department: *administering performance appraisals* and *training*. For each of the functions given, candidates were required to state two activities that should be completed by the department in performing the stated functions. In many instances, candidates performed unsatisfactorily in this section as they could not clearly state the activities carried out in either function. This part of the question was worth four marks.

For Part (b), candidates were required to state two actions an employer may take to discipline employees. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this section, giving responses such as *reprimands/counseling*, *warnings/meetings*, *memos on their conduct for the records*, and *dismissals*. Part (b) was worth three marks.

For Part (c) (i), candidates were required to copy a given table in their answer booklets. For each of the aspects outlined in the table, they were to outline two benefits that an employee may derive from statutory provisions. An example of each aspect was done for the candidates. This was not well done. In most instances, candidates were unable to outline the benefits that an employee may derive from the statutory provisions. This part of the question was worth six marks.

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were required to state three actions that the clerk should carry out to ensure that the process of shortlisting applicants is fair. Many candidates were not familiar with the term *shortlisting* and failed to give expected responses such as *including suitable prospective candidates from list to be interviewed*; *setting aside all applicants that do not qualify for the job*; and *reviewing applications carefully and selecting candidates with appropriate academic qualifications*. Part (c) (ii) was worth three marks.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 4.94.

Question 7

The question tested candidates' knowledge of the functions of the purchasing and accounts offices.

For Part (a), candidates were asked to identify four duties of a clerk in the accounts office. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this section and indicated responses such as *preparing statements of accounts, totalling time cards, and preparing cash summary sheets*. This part of the question was worth three marks.

For Part (b), candidates were required to write any one of the following abbreviations in full and explain what each means: (i) COD and (ii) E & OE.

This segment of the question was moderately done. Most candidates were able to give the correct meaning for COD, which is *cash on delivery* but were unable to explain its meaning, that is, *the buyer pays the bill only when the goods are delivered*. However, E & OE, *errors and omissions excepted* proved more challenging for the candidates. This means that *the seller is entitled to make any change in the prices quoted on the invoice if there is an error or omission*. Part (b) was worth two marks.

Part (c) (i), worth four marks, required candidates to use the information given in a table to calculate the weekly gross pay and net pay. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this segment of the question, stating correctly the gross and net pay. Some candidates, however, could not differentiate between gross and net pay and substituted the gross pay for net pay and vice versa.

Part (c) (ii) required candidates to calculate the total net salary, if Ms Hart was also given a commission of 20 per cent of her net pay. Many candidates were able to calculate the total net salary correctly. Part (c) (ii) was worth two marks.

For Part (c) (iii), worth three marks, candidates were required to copy a cheque in their answer booklets and complete it. The cheque should show the total salary paid to Anne Hart for the week. The cheque should be signed by Mr Dave Watts, the accountant. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this section.

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 7.88.

Question 8

This question tested candidates' knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of a clerk in the factory office including the completion of forms used in this office.

For Part (a), candidates were asked to list three duties of a clerk in the factory office. Candidates' performance on this section was only fair as many candidates failed to attempt this section and to supply correct responses such as *preparing statements of accounts, totaling time cards, and preparing debit and credit notes*. Part (a) was worth three marks.

Part (b), worth three marks, required candidates to identify three documents, other than a job card, that are used in the factory office. Like part (a), some candidates did not respond to this section and others who attempted it could only correctly list one document.

For Part (c), candidates were required to complete a job card, using the form provided. Candidates were given the information for the job card. In most instances, candidates who attempted this section scored maximum marks. The performance on this section was satisfactory. Part (c) was worth nine marks.

The marks obtained for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 8.60.

Paper 032 — Alternative to School-Based Assessment

A short case was provided and candidates were required to read and respond to ten structured questions asked. This paper was worth 50 marks.

The Case

The case focused on a fictitious school, Fairview Secondary, and its plan to introduce a textbook loan scheme. In the past, secondary school students in Fairview were responsible for purchasing their textbooks. However, many students were unable to purchase books because of the high cost. To ensure that all secondary school students have access to books, the Fairview Education Board is planning to introduce a free textbook loan scheme. Under the proposed scheme, students will be supplied with the books for each subject and will be required to return them at the end of the school year.

Question 1

Candidates were required to construct three questions to be included in a questionnaire to find out what parents think about receiving books from the loan scheme. Although this part was fairly well done, some candidates phrased the responses in statement form, instead of in the form of questions. This question was worth three marks.

Question 2

Candidates were provided with the results of the questionnaire and were asked to use a bar chart to illustrate these results. They were to calculate the number of parents who supported the textbook loan scheme and those who did not. Although in most instances candidates earned the maximum marks, a small percentage of them miscalculated and presented incorrect responses. This question was worth five marks.

Question 3

Candidates were required to write a short paragraph highlighting the results of the questionnaire and to inform the Fairview Education Board if it should introduce the textbook loan scheme in the schools. They were required to justify their responses. Performance in this section revealed that many candidates had difficulty responding favourably to this question as some of them supplied only findings, others only results, while others gave justifications without supplying either findings or results. This question was worth six marks.

Question 4

In this question, candidates were asked to use specific information to prepare an advertisement to be placed in the local newspaper, inviting publishers to submit three copies each of textbooks in the categories of Information Technology and Office Administration

For this question, most candidates supplied the components requested and received partial marks. However, many candidates failed to demonstrate awareness of the way an advertisement should be displayed by simply producing a short paragraph. This question was worth six marks.

Question 5

In this question, worth eight marks, candidates were asked to prepare a letter to the Education Board in response to the advertisement to submit an Office Administration textbook and to include three reasons why the textbook should be included in the loan scheme. Many candidates failed to demonstrate correct layout of a letter, including the addresses and date placement, and many of them failed to match the salutation with the complimentary close. In addition, in most instances, the enclosure notation was omitted. This question was poorly done.

Question 6

Candidates were asked to prepare a report on the suitability of books for the loan scheme. They were asked to supply an appropriate title for the report and to outline four features of the textbook that may encourage students to use it. This question was done well, most candidates scored the full four marks.

Question 7

This question asked for candidates' responses regarding the reason a call was not answered after supplying different time zones. This appeared easy for the majority of candidates, but some of them lost a mark because they failed to mention the time difference. This question was worth two marks.

Question 8

In this question, worth four marks, candidates were instructed to write a letter to one of the suppliers of the textbook informing them that the textbooks are needed urgently. In addition, candidates were required to suggest two other methods of communicating with the suppliers, giving one reason for using each of the proposed methods.

This question was handled fairly well as most candidates were able to list the telephone and email as alternative methods, but in some instances, they failed to supply the advantage of using each method.

Question 9

Candidates were required to calculate the shipping and handling costs for the books. They were given a list of shipping costs for the Freight Xpress courier company. The question asked candidates to calculate the total cost of shipment. While some candidates had a problem calculating the correct costs of shipment, many others scored satisfactorily on this question. This question was worth five marks.

Question 10

This question required candidates to design a flyer for distribution to students, identifying four ways to care for textbooks. In most instances, candidates' responses were very imaginative and they applied creativity in designing their flyers. On the whole, candidates seemed to have enjoyed answering this question which was worth six marks.

The overall performance on this paper was satisfactory. The marks ranged from 0 to 47 and the mean score was 27.06.

Paper 031 — School-Based Assessment (SBA)

The SBA component of the Office Administration course is an integral part of students' assessment which is covered by the syllabus. It is designed to assist students with the acquisition of specific knowledge, skills, attributes and attitudes during the secondary school experience, for application in a practical manner. This single guided research project is intended to develop in students the basic skills of research and should lead to a sense of accomplishment as they collect data in a scientific manner.

The information gathered through various methods such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, the Internet, or by means of primary and secondary sources is compiled in a report, complete, inter alia, with title page, table of contents and bibliography. This paper was worth 50 marks.

Title Page

In general, candidates were able to present the title page with the required information such as the name of the teacher, school, candidate, examination body, and the subject under examination. However, a few candidates lost a mark for omitting the teacher's name.

Table of Contents

Most candidates were able to prepare suitable tables of contents with appropriate headings and page numbers, as detailed on the mark scheme. In some instances, candidates used ranges to complete the TOC, for example, Report..... 9–12. This should not be encouraged. The report, which starts on page 9, is adequate. Any subsequent headings would indicate on which page each sub-section starts. Students, however, should ensure that the table of contents is complete and should cover the entire body of the project.

Project Title

The topics selected were invariably not carefully structured, with the result that some were too broad and in a few cases, outside the scope of the syllabus. It must be noted that topics must be related to the objectives in the syllabus and framed in a manner to indicate that the student is examining or researching some specific area which has some educational or social value from which he/she will learn. The topic should not be too broadly stated, thus creating an overwhelming workload for the student. The department being investigated must be specifically stated.

Aims

The aims should be stated clearly and must state precisely what the student is setting out to do. Many students failed to state these in a manner which limited them to the title of the project. The aims must be clearly linked to the title.

Functions

Several students scored full marks in this section once the department was identified. However, those students who scored zero gave functions of the business studied and not the department itself. In a few instances, students gave the duties of the clerk in the department.

Correspondence

Generally, the letters presented were generated from the students and contained the relevant content. However, many students failed to follow the general principle in letter writing. Formatting was the main issue identified as it relates to the date, line-spacing and appropriate matching of the salutation with the complimentary close. The salutation should give an indication of what form the complimentary close should take, for example, named person (Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr Brown — Yours sincerely); and unnamed person (Dear Sir/Madam — Yours faithfully/respectfully). ‘Yours truly’ is not acceptable. In many instances, the students /writers did not sign the letter.

Methodology

Most students did not explain how and why the instruments were used or why the instrument chosen was used over the others. In some cases, the instruments themselves were not properly constructed. Some students failed to include the data gathering instrument in the appendix.

Questions

This was done satisfactorily by most students, although some of the questions submitted were not relevant. Questions should be linked to both the title of the project and its aims. Students should avoid giving statements and answers for questions.

Schedule of activities

Several students failed to produce a table showing 10–12 activities. In most cases, the comments did not relate to the activities given. In a few instances, the activities stated were relevant to what happened in the business and not the project. Comments given should support the follow-up actions or decisions taken.

Regulations/Policies

From the responses given to this area, it was evident that several students had difficulty distinguishing between company policy and legislation governing the workplace. In many instances, students failed to state how they became aware of the legislation. However, the ‘Health and Safety Practices observed’ section was done satisfactorily. Many students were able to state the staff rule but failed to state how they had to comply with the stated rule while carrying out the project.

Report Presentation

Generally, reports did not include charts or graphs or meet the requirements of 500–750 words. In some instances, the reports did not depict the true findings of the research as related to the aims or the data-gathering instrument presented. Some students failed to state what they had accomplished by conducting the research or to present meaningful problem-solving strategies.

Business Forms

Business forms used in the project must be related to the department under consideration. In a few instances, students simply included forms that bore no relevance to what they set out to do.

Bibliography

Many students failed to obtain the maximum marks allocated for this section as they did not complete the listing of resources used or the Internet sites referenced.

Office Equipment

As indicated in the mark scheme, the equipment stated in the SBA must be equipment observed or used in the department studied. Although many students were able to identify the equipment used, their comments did not relate to the suitability of tasks in the business. Rather, their comments were based on how the researcher used the equipment to complete the project.

Major Strengths

Neat and well organized, word-processed projects.

Weaknesses

- Failure to attach to the project a current mark scheme to show how the students was marked
- Failure to state how students became aware of the legislation regulating the workplace
- Failure to state the department of the organization under study
- Incorrect sources of information
 - For persons interviewed: date, place and job title
 - Publications: Use APA or MLA or other approved styles
 - Internet sites: address of the website, name of authors and organizations
- Some schools submitted SBAs that were based on the old mark scheme, hence, there was a wide disparity between the teacher and the moderator's marks.

For the SBA, marks ranged from 0 to 50. The mean score was 34.29.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO TEACHERS:

- Ensure that all students gain access to a copy of the current mark scheme for the SBA component to use as a guideline for successful completion of the project.
- Encourage students to pay keen attention to detail in order to maximize on the marks allocated.
- Monitor students consistently throughout the project to ensure that it is done correctly and that the stipulated guidelines in the current syllabus are being pursued.
- Give more exposure to Paper 032 type questions.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

JANUARY 2012

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The Office Administration examination is offered in January and May/June each year. In January, three papers are offered at the General Proficiency level:

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice, Paper 02 – Short Answer and Paper 032 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment (SBA).

In January 2012, there was marked improvement in performance, with 83 per cent of the candidates achieving Grades I–III, compared with 77 per cent in 2011. This was due mainly to improvement on Paper 02. This year, the mean on Paper 02 was 41 per cent, compared with 34 per cent in 2011. While there were some encouraging responses to questions on Papers 02 and 032, there were also some areas of weakness. These areas are addressed in the detailed comments on individual questions.

Paper 01 consisted of 60 multiple-choice items. Candidate performance was comparable with that of 2011. The overall mean was 36.40 compared with 34.76 for January 2011. Marks ranged from 12 to 58 out of a maximum available score of 60.

Paper 02 consisted of two sections. Section I consisted of four compulsory questions covering Modules I–VI and Module XII. These questions were attempted by the majority of candidates.

Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Modules VII to XI. Knowledge and the application of procedures associated with specialized office activities and office routines were assessed in this section. Candidates were required to answer any two questions from Section II. The overall mean for this paper was 40.69 compared with 33.82 in 2011. Marks ranged from 0 to 77 out of a maximum of 90. While this improvement is commendable, there are, however, some areas that continue to pose difficulty to candidates. These areas are addressed in the section for ‘Detailed Comments’.

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

This paper targeted private individuals who would not have had the opportunity to complete SBA projects as school candidates. It took the form of a written examination designed to test candidates’ ability to use their personal experiences of routine office activities acquired through observation or from performing the actual office tasks as a real employee.

The paper consisted of ten short, structured essay-type questions, based on an office case. For this examination, the case focused mainly on Module X of the syllabus which covers sales and marketing, and to a lesser extent, on Modules II and VIII which deal with communication and the accounts office, respectively.

The overall mean for this paper was 27.39 compared with 30.08 in 2011. Marks ranged from 1 to 46 out of a maximum of 50.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Section I consisted of four compulsory questions, each worth 15 marks.

Question 1

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- the modes of oral communication
- sources of reference materials used by a receptionist
- the types of information that a secretary can obtain from specified sources
- the consequences of reporting messages inaccurately
- the components of an email.

For Part (a) which was worth two marks, candidates were required to identify two modes of oral communication that can be used to advertise a company's products. Generally, candidates were able to identify two modes and gave responses such as *radio*, *television*, *telephone* and *word of mouth*.

In Part (b) (i), candidates were asked to suggest two sources of reference materials which may be used by a receptionist. This part of the question was worth two marks.

Candidates gave responses such as the *dictionary*, *hansard* and *encyclopedia*. In some instances, candidates inaccurately named the 'telephone' rather than the *telephone directory* as a reference material.

Part (b) (ii) required candidates to identify one item of information which a secretary could obtain from the following sources: (i) map, (ii) official gazette and (iii) post office guide. This part of the question was worth three marks.

Candidates were more familiar with the concept of 'map' and provided correct responses such as *directions*, *locations* and *countries*. However, the official gazette, and to a lesser extent, the post office guide, presented some difficulty to candidates.

Expected responses for the official gazette, including recent *appointments*, *legal issues*, *job offers* and *advertisements*, were not presented. Similarly, many candidates failed to provide correct responses for the post office guide such as *postal information* and *postage rates* when answering this part of the question.

Part (c) (i), which was worth two marks, required candidates to state two consequences a receptionist would face for reporting a message inaccurately.

In some instances, candidates stated some extreme consequences such as ‘firing’ or ‘dismissing the receptionist’, instead of more plausible responses such as *queries will not be resolved, incorrect information pertaining to dates and times will be conveyed* and the *possibility of ambiguities and distortions of the message*.

In Part (c) (ii), candidates were asked to assume that they were the receptionist at Northern Supplies, Trinidad. They were required to compose an email to be sent to Mr Neal Sparks, the purchasing clerk, to convey a message from Mrs May Peters of Home Supplies Ltd to Mr Sparks about an order which was placed two weeks previously. This part of the question was worth 6 marks.

Many candidates failed to head up the email correctly by writing key words such as *To, From,* and *Subject*. Some candidates wrote the date, which was not necessary, since the date is inserted, by default, when composing an email. However, the body of the message which carried most of the marks was satisfactorily done.

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 7.31.

Question 2

This question tested candidates’ knowledge of filing systems and of specific office duties, namely (i) answering the telephone, (ii) filing inactive files, (iii) dealing with outgoing mail and (iv) scheduling appointments.

Part (a) required candidates to identify three advantages of using the electronic filing system as a means of storage. This part of the question was worth three marks. Popular responses provided by candidates included *less paper use, easy retrieval, safer and more effective* and *less time consuming*. This part of the question was satisfactorily done.

In Part (b), which was worth four marks, candidates were required to define the terms *copyright* and *libel* in relation to records and information management. The majority of candidates were able to provide an appropriate definition for *copyright*, that is, *a set of exclusive rights granted by a state to the creator of an original work, or the right to reproduce, publish, sell or distribute the matter and form of something as a literary, musical or artistic work*.

However, many candidates failed to differentiate between the two concepts and gave a definition for *libel* which was similar to that of *copyright*. Candidates who performed well on this part of the question gave correct responses for *libel* such as *a published false statement that is damaging to a person’s reputation* or *a written or visual defamation, which takes the form of lies in print, or misleading or deceptive photographs*.

Part (c) required candidates to outline two tips that they would give to the assistant clerk for carrying out specific office duties. This part of the question was worth eight marks.

This part of the question was generally well done by candidates, except for Part (ii) which dealt with filing inactive files. Correct responses for answering the telephone such as *answer telephone promptly, be polite, helpful and tactful at all times, and keep a message pad and writing instrument handy* were frequently provided by candidates.

In dealing with outgoing mail, candidates provided correct responses such as *check if letter is signed, check each envelope to verify address, special notations and postage, and enter particulars in the postage book*.

Candidates who scored full marks on scheduling appointments gave responses such as *study your executive's routine activities, agree on times, allow sufficient time between appointment, and confirm by letter any appointment made by telephone*.

Several candidates were unable to give correct answers that demonstrated that they knew how to deal with filing inactive files. Correct responses — such as *maintain a form of confidentiality, inactive files or dead files need to be disposed of in order to create room in the filing system, and when hard copy documents are unlikely to be used again, but cannot be destroyed for legal reasons, they can be placed in an archive* — were seldom provided by candidates.

However, the one frequent correct response that was given for filing inactive records was that the *documents should be shredded*.

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 8.28.

Question 3

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- documents that are required for travelling overseas
- services offered by the bank, travel agency and the embassy
- tasks to be performed to ensure appropriate hotel arrangements
- how to prepare an itinerary.

For Part (a), candidates were required to list four travel documents that are required for an overseas field trip. This part of the question was worth four marks.

The majority of candidates supplied satisfactory answers such as *visa, itinerary, passport, travel ticket* and *driver's licence/permit/ID*.

For Part (b), which was worth three marks, candidates were required to identify one service that is offered by each of the following three types of organizations: (i) bank, (ii) travel agency and (iii) embassy. This part of the question was handled well by most candidates.

Favourable answers for services offered by the bank included *travellers' cheques, money transfers, credit cards, ATM services, e-banking and financial advice.*

Correct responses provided for the travel agency included *flight arrangements, hotel bookings, tour bookings, and transportation/car rentals.*

Expected responses for services offered by the embassy included *scheduling appointments for interviews, assisting citizens with visa requirements and notarizing documents during normal service hours.*

For Part (c), candidates were required to prepare a list of three tasks that must be performed to ensure that appropriate hotel arrangements are made for an executive who will be attending a regional conference for a specified period. This part of the question was worth three marks. Among the tasks that candidates listed included the *name of person for booking, type of room accommodation, length of stay, food preferences and payment plan.*

For Part (d), candidates were required to prepare an itinerary using the information given in the scenario. This section was worth five marks and was satisfactorily done. The majority of candidates were able to convert to the 24-hour clock and provide details of dates and times of arrival at and departure from the various destinations. However, a major weakness identified in this part of the question was that some candidates failed to head up the itinerary to include *the name of the document (itinerary), the person for whom the itinerary was being prepared and the period for travel.*

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 8.95.

Question 4

This question was designed to test candidates' knowledge of job recruitment and resignation procedures.

For Part (a), candidates were required to list three factors which should be considered when seeking employment based on a particular scenario. Popular among the correct responses provided by candidates were *type and size of business, working hours, salary, fringe benefits, location, qualifications/skills required and working hours.*

For Part (b) (i), which was worth one mark, many candidates failed to give a correct definition of *deportment* and instead provided definitions for 'deport' or 'deportee'. Those candidates who earned the mark gave responses such as *the ability to conduct oneself in an acceptable manner, one's behaviour/actions in public, one's appearance and dress.*

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were required to state three fringe benefits that an employer may offer to an employee. This part of the question was worth three marks. Candidates scored well on this

section and gave correct responses such as *medical insurance, retirement plans, housing allowances, company car and payment for fitness/wellness programmes.*

For Part (c), worth eight marks, candidates were required to write a letter of resignation based on a given scenario. This part of the question was handled well by most candidates. Candidates were able to indicate the different parts of the letter — *address and date, salutation and complimentary close, body of letter to include reason for leaving job as well as an expression of thanks to the employer.*

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 7.35.

Question 5

This question examined candidates' knowledge of the functions of the human resources department.

For Part (a), candidates were required to list two tasks other than 'considering completed application forms' that the human resources clerk would be required to perform. This part of the question was worth two marks. Examples of correct answers provided by candidates included *writing and placing job advertisements/vacancies in the media, short listing applicants and selection of the right person for the job.*

For Part (b), candidates were required to identify four areas of welfare that can be provided by a company to show that employees are valued. The majority of candidates responded satisfactorily to this part of the question, which was worth four marks. Candidates gave favourable responses such as *access to subsidized health insurance, provision of staff cafeteria, providing comfortable chairs and desks/furniture, involving retired staff in social activities, visiting staff on sick leave or hospitalized, and providing free counseling services, for example, in case of bereavement/divorce.*

In Part (c) (i), candidates were required to outline three activities that an employee should undertake in preparation for a job induction session. This part of the question was worth three marks. Candidates' performance on this section was only fair as several of the responses given were unrelated to the concept of induction. Candidates were expected to give responses such as *learning about the organization's values and history, prepare a list of questions that he would like answered, and research the industry to gain basic knowledge to help him to be productive in his job.*

In Part (c) (ii), candidates were required to state three challenges a new employee, Mr Rajesh Boola, is likely to face in his new role after being deployed from the human resources department to the factory and transport department. This part of the question, worth three marks, was fairly well done. Some candidates submitted favourable responses such as *acceptance/perception of new staff, stress and fear of ability to perform to the best of his ability in a new department, issues regarding human and physical resources, and speed at which he can adapt to his new role and responsibilities.*

Part (c) (iii), which was worth three marks, required candidates to describe three desirable attitudes likely to lead to Rajesh's success in the department. Candidates seemed to have a good grasp of this aspect of the syllabus and supplied satisfactory responses such as *dependability, team spirit, cooperation, honesty/integrity, and tolerance/respect/courtesy*.

Marks ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 5.99.

Question 6

This question tested candidates' knowledge of purchasing and stock control procedures.

For Part (a), which was worth two marks, candidates were required to write any one of the following acronyms in full and explain what each means: (i) COD and (ii) E & OE .

This segment of the question was satisfactorily done. Most candidates were able to give the correct meaning for COD which is *cash on delivery* and were able to explain the meaning, that is, *the buyer pays the bill only when the goods are delivered*. However, E & OE, which means *errors and omissions excepted*, proved more challenging to candidates. This means that *the seller is entitled to make any change in the prices quoted on the invoice if there is an error or omission*.

For Part (b), candidates were required to state two reasons for keeping control of stock. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question and were able to give correct responses such as *maintaining adequate supplies, preventing pilferage, avoiding wastage/deterioration and monitoring availability of capital*. This part of the question was worth two marks.

For Part (c), worth two marks, candidates were required to define the terms 'continuous or perpetual inventory' and 'annual inventory'. This section was satisfactorily done as candidates were able to define correctly 'continuous or perpetual inventory' as *the recording or receipts and issues from stock as they occur and the maintenance of a running balance*. Annual inventory, on the other hand, is defined as *the process which is carried out once a year for the end-of-year financial accounts required by law*.

For Part (d), candidates were required to use the information on the given stock list to complete the stock record forms which were provided. This part of the question was worth nine marks. Candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this segment of the question; most of them failed to complete the forms with the appropriate data required.

Marks ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 4.39.

Question 7

This question tested candidates' knowledge of the functions of the sales and marketing office with particular focus on the duties of a marketing clerk, uses of a mailing list and the preparation of quotations.

In Part (a), worth three marks, candidates were required to state three key functions performed by a marketing clerk. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this segment of the question and were able to submit correct responses such as *assists in organizing promotional activities, assists in preparing press releases, prepares and maintains mailing lists, assists in packaging and delivery, prepares advertising materials and makes travel arrangements for marketing purposes.*

For Part (b), candidates were asked to state three uses of a mailing list. Candidates performed creditably on this segment of the question, giving correct responses such as *it serves as reference of a current list of customers, clients and subscribers and it saves time in locating names and addresses of valued customers and subscribers.* This part of the question was worth three marks.

For Part (c) (i), candidates were presented with a scenario in which they were to assume the role of a marketing clerk with responsibilities for promotional activities. The first task was to recommend a four-point strategy to keep a client (Mr Bennett), who is interested in buying six sports utility vehicles, informed of promotional activities.

Candidates performed satisfactorily in this section and gave correct responses such as *keep a tickler to follow up on Mr Bennett's enquiry, supply Mr Bennett with up-to-date sales literature as soon as it becomes available and supply him with relevant website links on the proposed vehicles.* This part of the question was worth four marks.

Part (c) (ii), worth five marks, required candidates to use the form provided to prepare a quotation for Mr Bennett using the information given in the enquiry. Candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this segment of the question as many candidates failed to complete the form accurately and omitted important details such as *the date, quotation provided for and the terms of sale.* In addition, candidates failed to calculate accurately the *total price, discount, and the price less discount.*

Marks ranged from 0 to 12, and the mean was 3.66.

Question 8

This question tested candidates' knowledge of the factory, despatch and transport offices. This question was the least popular of the four optional questions.

For Part (a), candidates were asked to identify two types of factory records that a clerk who works in the factory, despatch and transport offices would use. Candidates' performance in this section was only fair as many candidates failed to attempt this section and to supply correct responses

such as *planning master, material schedule, job card/job record, time card, shift roster, progress card/production control card*. This part of the question was worth two marks.

Part (b), worth two marks, required candidates to explain any two of the following terms: (i) progress chasing, (ii) overheads and (iii) quality control.

With the exception of ‘quality control’ which is defined as *ensuring that the company’s quality standards are being maintained*, the other two terms were inappropriately defined. Correct responses required from candidates should have included:

- Progress chasing — checking on the progress of items on the assembly line and completing a progress advice form to be compared with the planning chart.
- Overheads — the percentage of the cost which cannot be traced to an individual product but which is incurred in the production process, such as factory lighting, water, factory rates and fuel.

For Part (c), worth two marks, candidates were required to explain two purposes of the delivery note. This segment of the question was satisfactorily done as candidates gave correct responses such as *it is used to get a signature from the customer as acceptance of the goods, the customer keeps this for his records, the second signed copy serves as evidence to indicate that the goods were delivered to the address and indicates that it was received*.

For Part (d) (i), candidates were required to outline five actions which should be taken by the despatch and transport office to ensure delivery of an order to a customer. In most instances, candidates who attempted this section scored satisfactorily and submitted correct responses such as *prepare documents for the despatch of goods — delivery note — and schedule delivery, liaise with accounts department to confirm cost, get invoices and prepare destination sheet for the transport*. This part of the question was worth five marks.

For Part (d) (ii), worth four marks, candidates were presented with a scenario in which several failed attempts had been made to deliver goods. On the first attempt, poor directions were given to the driver who eventually returned to the office and on the second attempt, the customer was not at home. Candidates were required to state four actions that should have been taken to avoid the problems.

This part of the question was satisfactorily done. Candidates gave acceptable responses such as *call the client and get specific and correct directions to the home, arrange a mutually convenient time to deliver the goods, reschedule the delivery time and ensure that the delivery person has mobile communication equipment and is able to contact the office and customer*. This part of the question was worth four marks.

Marks ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 5.90.

Paper 032 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment

A short case was provided and candidates were required to read and respond to ten structured questions. This paper was worth 50 marks.

The Case

This case was developed mainly from Module X — Sales and Marketing — and to a lesser extent on Module II — Communication.

The case focused on the opening of a newly registered, middle-sized production company in Grenada. The company was in the process of developing a new fruit bar from Caribbean fruits and required a marketing clerk to assist with this launch. The scenarios based on the case centered on tasks the marketing clerk would have to perform such as carrying out a market research study, summarizing and presenting the results of the study, as well as designing promotional material for the launch of the new fruit bar.

Candidates were required to apply analytical and evaluative skills to respond appropriately to the questions.

Question 1

Candidates were required to prepare an advertisement for the position of marketing clerk to appear in the weekend newspaper. They were to use the information given to prepare the advertisement.

The majority of candidates was able to score maximum marks for this question and included in the advertisement information relating to the *description of the person for the job, qualifications, personality, experience and duties*. This question was worth six marks.

Question 2

Candidates were required to suggest three marketing strategies that would effectively promote the new fruit bar. Most of them were able to identify marketing strategies used for a product line and submitted correct responses such as *distribution of samples, 'promotions – buy one, get one', advertisements and create a 'blog' entry online to discuss the product*. However, only very few candidates suggested *introducing the product at a low cost* as a strategy.

Question 3

This question had two parts. Part (a), worth three marks, required candidates to write three questions to be included in a questionnaire designed to find out how feasible the introduction of such products would be in the Caribbean. The majority of candidates were able to formulate reasonable responses which included questions on *the cost of the product; type of product;*

availability of raw material; health perspective and packaging.

Part (b) required candidates to suggest the most appropriate type of research method they would use to carry out a research on the new fruit bar and to give three reasons to justify the response. Candidates gave *survey/questionnaire* as the best method to use to conduct research, and gave reasons such as *information can be gathered quickly, it is an easier method of collecting data, it is inexpensive and both manual and electronic means can be used to gather information*. This part of the question was worth four marks.

Question 4

Candidates were required to write a short report summarizing the results of the research, and to identify one recommendation for developing this new product.

The majority of candidates was able to produce the report from the information given and included relevant information in the body of the report. However, candidates omitted the heading for the report and therefore failed to score the mark allotted to it. For the recommendation, some candidates again reported findings rather than stating a recommendation. An expected suggested recommendation could be as follows:

- recommend that product is not only introduced or advertised regionally, but globally, or
- that other Caribbean countries invest in the introduction of product line

This question was worth six marks.

Question 5

Candidates were required to state two ways each in which a multimedia projector and graphs/charts could be used to enhance the presentation of the report for the board of directors.

This question was fairly well done by most candidates who gave correct responses for the multimedia projector including *it allows everyone in the room to see presentation, allows for direct engagement which adds impact to presentation and having a display on large screen facilitates more effective, free flowing discussions*.

Candidates stated that using charts or graphs in the presentation *makes it easier to understand numerical data, enables the summary of a large set of data in visual form and allows for comparisons in growth*.

This question was worth four marks.

Question 6

Candidates were required to develop a check list in chronological order, to be sent to invitees, asking them to indicate the most convenient days and times for the conference at which the fruit bar would be introduced to potential investors.

Most candidates were able to place the information given in chronological order. Candidates were expected to put in check boxes and instructions for invitees. Most candidates were able to score four of the five marks allotted to this question.

Question 7

For this question, candidates were required to prepare a departmental budget outlining the overall costing of the conference. The budget should include overall revenue and monies spent. Candidates were also required to calculate the profit or loss of this event.

The responses to this question were only fair. Candidates were expected to setup the budget showing clearly income, expenses and profit as follows:

Budget for Fruit Bar Conference
To be held on ----- May 2012

Revenue		
<u>Actual</u>		
Sponsorship	\$5,000.00	
Department Funds	\$3,000.00	
<u>Intended</u>		
Sale of Books	\$1,000.00	
Registration fees	\$2,000.00	
Total Revenue		\$11,000.00
Expenses		
Rental	\$1,000.00	
Hotel accommodation	\$3,200.00	
Material & stationery	\$250.00	
Food & refreshment	\$2,500.00	
Miscellaneous	\$500.00	
Total Expenses		\$7,450.00
Profit		\$3,550.00
Profit = Revenue – Expenses \$11,000 - \$7,450 = \$3,550		

This question was worth five marks.

Question 8

This question required candidates to develop a short radio advertisement which should focus on promoting the conference, its purpose as well as the location, time, date and registration fee. The advertisement should be very persuasive to attract as many persons as possible to attend the conference.

The question was satisfactorily done with the majority of candidates designing advertisements which included pertinent information in a persuasive manner.

This question was worth five marks.

Question 9

For this question, worth five marks, candidates were required to draft a banner that could be used to advertise the conference. The banner should include the *name of the conference date, day and time, banner theme and company logo*.

Candidates scored satisfactorily on this question. However, most candidates were not familiar with the term 'logo' or were not able to differentiate between a logo and a decorative design.

Question 10

Candidates were required to use the information given about the conference to prepare a welcome address to be delivered at the conference.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question, as they scored marks for:

- addressing the audience
- welcoming the audience
- stating the purpose of the conference
- repeating the welcome or giving an appropriate closure

This question was worth four marks.

The overall performance on this paper was satisfactory with marks ranging from 0 to 47, and a mean score of 27.06.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- More exposure to questions examined on Paper 032.
- Since most candidates who sit this examination are private candidates, upon registering for the examination, they should be informed that they need to be guided by the syllabus, recommended texts and support materials.
- Candidates should visit the CXC website and read comments presented in the subject reports to assist them in identifying their strengths and weaknesses.
- Candidates need to practise completing forms accurately, since this is one of the areas of poor performance.
- In responding to questions, candidates should take note of key words to guide them in presenting information in a logical and organized manner.
- Private candidates should also consider seeking assistance from experienced teachers in the school system.

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

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

MAY/JUNE 2012

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

GENERAL COMMENTS

The General Proficiency Office Administration examination is offered in January and May/June each year. In June 2012, some 17 322 candidates sat the examination compared with the June 2011 sitting when 16 937 candidates wrote the examination. Approximately, 78 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I–III compared with 88.70 per cent in 2011. There were some encouraging responses to questions on all three papers. However, there are some specific areas of weakness which need greater attention. These areas are outlined in the detailed comments on individual questions.

The objectives tested were chosen from all the modules. The papers offered were:

- Paper 01 – Multiple choice
- Paper 02 – Short answer
- Paper 031 – School-Based Assessment (SBA)
- Paper 032 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment (SBA)

Paper 01 covered the entire syllabus and was set to test Knowledge and Application/Profiles. Candidates' performance showed more or less similar achievement to that of 2011. The overall mean of the 2012 paper was 34.64 compared with 34.75 for June 2011. Marks ranged from 2 to 59 out of a maximum of 60.

Paper 02 also assessed Knowledge and Application of procedures and processes associated with specialized office activities and routines. This paper consisted of two sections. Section I comprised four compulsory questions covering Modules I–VI and Module XII. These questions were attempted by the majority of candidates.

Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Modules VII–XI. Candidates were required to answer two questions from Section II, so, in total, candidates were required to answer six questions from Paper 02. The overall mean for this paper was 40.37 compared with 50.32 in 2011. Marks ranged from 0 to 83 out of a maximum of 90. There are some areas that continue to pose difficulty for candidates and this is reflected in their overall performance.

Paper 031 is a project for candidates in regular school settings, and is set and marked by the teacher, using guidelines and criteria provided in the syllabus. The overall mean for this paper was 32.89 compared with 34.29 in 2011. Marks ranged from 0 to 50 out of a maximum of 50.

Paper 032 took the form of a written examination that targeted private candidates who would not have had the opportunity to complete SBA projects as school candidates. The paper was designed to test candidates' ability to use their personal experiences on routine office activities acquired through observation or from doing actual office tasks as a real employee. The paper consisted of ten structured response-type questions, which were based on an office case. For this examination, the case focused on Module XII of the syllabus — Recruitment and Orientation.

Candidates' performance improved slightly on this paper, with a mean of 30.69 compared with 27.06 in 2011. Marks ranged from 2 to 46 out of 50.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Section I

Section I was compulsory and each question was worth 15 marks

Question 1

This question tested Module III, Objectives 1 and 2. It was designed to test candidates' knowledge and their ability to apply the knowledge related to the management of records. The mean for the question was 4.34.

For Part (a), candidates were required to state three characteristics of an efficient records management system. For the most part, candidates were able to identify at least one characteristic. In Part (b) (i), candidates were required to list two types of filing classifications. This segment of the question was fairly done.

Part (b) (ii) required candidates to identify one type of record that is filed using the classification stated in (b) (i). The Majority of candidates was able to identify one type of record for alphabetical filing classification.

Part (c) (i) required candidates to complete a table given to show the indexing order of each of the names given. Most candidates who attempted this section were unable to give the appropriate responses. Candidates demonstrated a lack of knowledge *indexing* and *indexing order*.

Part (c) (ii) required candidates to prepare a cross-reference sheet for a client with a hyphenated name. This section was unsatisfactorily done. Again, candidates demonstrated very limited knowledge of this aspect of the syllabus. Part (c) (iii) required candidates to arrange three names given in alphabetical order. Candidates were expected to use the *rules of filing* to guide them in providing the correct response. This section was fairly well done.

Question 2

This question tested Module IV, Objective 1 (b, e, h, j) and Objective 2 (d). Specifically, the question tested candidates' understanding of terms associated with meetings and the different types of meetings. The mean mark for the question was 6.75.

Part (a) required candidates to state the meaning of the following terms:

- (i) Ad hoc
- (ii) Ex officio
- (iii) Proxy
- (iv) Motion

This section posed some difficulty for candidates. It was evident that candidates were not familiar with the terms as most of them failed to state appropriate meanings of the terms.

Part (b) required candidates to use information from a given excerpt to prepare a notice of meeting to be sent out by the board. Candidates were also required to include two agenda items. This section was popular among candidates and most of them were able to score highly.

Part (c) required candidates to state three legal requirements for convening an annual general meeting. The word *legal* was misinterpreted and in most cases was disregarded by candidates.

Question 3

This question tested Module IV, Objective 2 (a–g) and Objective 3 (a–d). It was designed to test candidates' understanding of the duties and responsibilities of a receptionist. For the most part, candidates' responses were fairly well done. The mean mark was 9.96.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were to list three main duties of a receptionist. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this section and were able to give responses such as:

- Receiving visitors
- Operating the switchboard
- Handling appointments
- Keeping a register of callers/callers' log
- Introducing and directing visitors
- Maintaining the reception area

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were required to identify two attributes, other than a good temperament, that a receptionist should possess. This section was satisfactorily done as most candidates were able to list two attributes.

For Part (a) (iii), candidates were required to state two security measures that should be practised by the reception staff. This section was handled well by the candidates and a large number of them were able to score the marks allotted.

For Part (b), candidates were required to use the form provided to enter the information given. Candidates were also required to convert times to the 24-hour clock. This part of the question was satisfactorily done by most candidates. However, some candidates failed to write appropriately the correct times and some of them used both the 12- and 24-hour formats.

Question 4

This question tested Module I, Objectives 1 and 3 (a–b); Module II Objective 1 (written- b); Module II, Objective 6. This question was designed to have candidates examine the benefits and drawbacks of an open plan office and also to apply the rules governing the composition of a memorandum. The mean mark was 8.01.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to state two advantages of the open plan office. Candidates gave appropriate responses such as *cheaper to maintain, better communication* and *easier to supervise*. This part of the question was handled well by candidates with the majority of them gaining the maximum marks allotted.

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were asked to state two disadvantages of the cellular office. Candidates were familiar with this aspect of the syllabus and gave favourable responses such as *less supervision, more costly to build and maintain, communication is minimal* and *more space is required*.

For Part (c), candidates were required to write a memorandum to the junior clerk indicating four main rules she should follow when answering the company's telephone. Most candidates made a fair attempt at answering the question.

Section II

Candidates were required to attempt any two of four questions from this section.

Question 5

This question tested Module VIII, Objective 2 (a–g); Objective 4 (d, g) and Objective 8(a–b). It was designed to test candidates' understanding of the role of the clerk in the accounts department and their knowledge of the preparation of some documents usually handled by this clerk. The mean was 4.52 and the marks ranged from 0 to 15. This was the least popular question in Section II.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to state two duties of an accounts clerk. Some candidates presented appropriate responses to include: *preparing payroll, ledger postings and preparation of cheques*.

In Part a (ii), candidates were required to identify two tasks that the computer can help the accounts clerk to accomplish in the accounts office. The majority of candidates were able to identify satisfactorily tasks such as:

- Data entry
- Storage of information
- Preparing accounting documents (invoices)
- Updating records
- Detecting errors

For Part (b), candidates were required to state two purposes of the spreadsheet as a useful tool in the accounts office. Candidates demonstrated knowledge of the purposes of the spreadsheet as an accounting tool and the majority of those who attempted this question was able to score maximum marks.

Parts (c) (i) required candidates to prepare a bank reconciliation statement using the information given. This section of the question posed difficulty for many candidates. The majority of candidates who attempted this question was unable to write up the statement accurately.

Part (c) (ii) required candidates to state three reasons why the cash book and bank reconciliation statement may differ. This aspect was satisfactorily done and candidates were able to state reasons such as:

- Standing order agreements
- Credit transfers
- Bank charges
- Late lodgment

Question 6

This question tested Module IX, Objectives 2, 3 and 6. It was the most popular among the optional questions. It tested candidates' understanding of the roles and function of the clerk in the purchasing department and their ability to calculate stock balance using the FIFO method. The mean marks ranged from 0 to 15, and the mean was 5.91.

For Part (a), candidates were required to identify two duties of the purchasing and stock control clerk. While the majority of candidates were able to identify the duties of the clerk satisfactorily, they were unable to differentiate between duties carried out by management and those carried out by entry-level workers as required by the question.

In Part (b) (i), candidates were required to list two factors that the purchasing clerk must consider when ordering goods. Candidates performed satisfactorily in this section, giving responses such as:

- Cost
- Warranty /guarantee offered
- Urgency
- After sales service

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were required to outline the procedure that a department should follow when making an internal request for supplies that (a) are in stock, (b) are not in stock. In most instances, candidates were able to outline the procedure satisfactorily; however, some candidates did not pay keen attention to the term '*internal*' and so gave an inappropriate response.

In Part (c) (i); candidates were required to use the information in the table given to calculate the value of the stock using the FIFO method. The form was provided for candidates. This section posed a great deal of difficulty for candidates. Candidates failed to use the columns appropriately with many candidates reversing the entries in the *balances* and *values* columns.

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were required to use the information given to complete a stock control card. Candidates' performance on this question demonstrated very little knowledge of calculating *running balances*.

Question 7

This question tested Module X, Objectives 1, 2 and 4. It examined the role and function of a clerk in the marketing department. The marks ranged from 0 to 15, and the mean was 5.14.

For Part (a), candidates were asked to identify three functions of the marketing office. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this section. Weaker candidates repeated the same function expressed in different ways.

For Part (b), candidates were required to state three reasons why a clerk in the sales and marketing department should maintain a mailing list. This section posed some level of difficulty for candidates.

Some candidates related their responses to the mail room while other candidates related their responses to the accounts office.

Part (c) (i) required candidates to explain the difference between a *trade discount* and a *cash discount*. Candidates had a working knowledge of *trade discount* and were able to state explicitly the correct meaning, however, the majority of candidates who attempted this question was not able to state the distinguishing feature of a *cash discount*.

Part (c) (ii) required candidates to calculate the amount of money a customer would pay if he took advantage of all the discounts. The majority of candidates who attempted this question was able to calculate correctly the total price before any discounts and the trade discounts. More than 50 per cent of the candidates who attempted this part of the question was able to score the maximum mark.

Question 8

This question tested Module XI, Objectives 1 and 3. It was designed to test candidates' understanding of the roles and functions of the factory, despatch and transport office. This was the second most popular question and had the highest mean of 8.44 in this section. Marks ranged from 0 to 15.

For Part (a), candidates were to outline three functions of the factory, despatch and transport office. Candidates' performance in this section was only fair as many of them failed to attempt this section and those who did were only able in most cases to list one function.

Part (b) required candidates to identify three duties, other than routine office duties, of a clerk in the transport office. As in Part (a), some candidates did not respond to this section and others who attempted could only list one duty.

For Part (c) (i), candidates were required to use the form given to complete an advice note from given information. Over 80 per cent of the candidates who attempted this section scored maximum marks. Performance on this section was good.

In Part (c) (ii), candidates were required to suggest three items of information that should be included on the gate pass they were asked to assist in designing. Performance on this section was fair.

Paper 032 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment

A short case was provided and candidates were required to read and respond to ten structured questions. This paper was worth 50 marks.

The case was based on a large Caribbean-owned company that specialized in providing office products and technology services to its customers. The company prided itself on being globally competitive, innovative and customer-focused, and placed emphasis on employing a workforce that was not only competent at multi-tasking but also multi-skilled. Management believed that this strategy would lead to increased productivity and consequently started a recruitment drive to employ staff with wide-ranging skills that can adapt and perform a multiplicity of activities in their company.

Candidates had to respond to ten questions to include:

- writing an unsolicited letter of application
- drafting an email
- preparing an advertisement for the newspaper
- suggesting ways to prepare for an interview
- outlining factors to consider when accepting a new position
- listing tasks to be completed before leaving one's current job.

Candidates performed satisfactorily for the most part, except in areas like the unsolicited letter where they did not express interest in whether or not a vacancy exists, and using appropriate salutation and complimentary close in letters and emails. Candidates should pay attention to sentence structure, grammar and spelling. More specific comments follow.

Question 1

Candidates were required to outline three characteristics that the management of Hi Tech Limited would want its employees to display. This part was done satisfactorily and candidates gave correct responses such as, *skillful in communication, IT and other relevant areas; multi-skilled and cross trained; qualified/professional/team player* and *able to respond to global competition*. This question was worth three marks and the mean was 2.02.

Question 2

Candidates were asked to write a short paragraph to explain the reason for applying to Hi Tech Limited for employment, giving justification. This section posed a challenge to many candidates as they were able to state only two reasons correctly. This question was worth five marks and the mean was 2.91.

Question 3

This question required candidates to prepare a draft of an unsolicited letter of application for the position of administrative assistant at Hi Tech Limited. Performance on this section was unsatisfactory. This question was worth eight marks and the mean was 4.53.

Question 4

Candidates were required to draft a copy of the email that Kamla received at her email address, kramugh@mail.com. This was based on information given. The question was worth eight marks and the mean was 4.14.

Question 5

In this question, candidates were asked to use the information provided to prepare an advertisement to appear in the weekend newspapers. They performed fairly well on this section. This question was worth six marks and the mean was 5.32.

Question 6

Candidates were asked to state four ways in which Kamla can prepare for the interview. This question was worth four marks and the mean was 2.68.

Question 7

Candidates were asked to suggest three techniques/ways to remain calm during an interview when one starts to feel very nervous. This question was worth three marks and the mean was 1.43.

Question 8

Candidates were asked to develop one question for each of five factors (education, job security, opportunities for promotion, working hours, training) that individuals could ask during an interview. Candidates were required to use the specific format given. This question was worth five marks and the mean was 3.57.

Question 9

Candidates were required to suggest three factors to consider when deciding whether to accept a job position. This question was worth three marks and the mean was 2.22.

Question 10

This question required candidates to prepare a checklist of four tasks that should be completed before leaving one's current job. It was worth five marks and the mean was 2.44.

The overall performance on the paper was satisfactory. Marks ranged from 2 to 46. The mean was 30.69 compared with 27.06 in 2011.

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

Candidates should

- acquire a personal copy of the syllabus and incorporate it in their examination preparation process
- make optimal use of past papers and access the CXC website for comments presented in the subject report to assist in identifying their strengths and weaknesses
- seek assistance from experienced teachers in the school system, as well as from past successful scholars of Office Administration.

Paper 031 — School Based Assessment (SBA)

The SBA component of the Office Administration course is an integral part of students' assessment which is covered by the syllabus. It is designed to assist students with the acquisition of specific knowledge, skills, attributes, and attitudes during the secondary school experience, for application in a practical manner. This single guided research project is intended to develop in students the basic skills of research and should lead to a sense of accomplishment as they collect data in a scientific manner.

The information gathered through various methods such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, the internet, or by means of primary and secondary sources are compiled in a report, complete, inter alia, with title page, table of contents and bibliography. This paper is worth 50 marks.

Title Page

In general, students were able to present the title page with the required information. However, a few of them lost marks for omitting the project title, teacher's name, and name of the school.

Table of Contents

Most students were able to prepare suitable table of contents (TOC) as detailed on the mark scheme. However, some TOCs were without page numbers while in others the page numbers did not correspond at all. In some instances, students used ranges to complete the TOC, for example, Report..... 9–12. This should not be encouraged. The report which starts, for example, on page 9 is good enough. Subsequent headings would indicate on which page each starts. Students, however, should ensure that the table of contents is complete and should cover the entire body of the project.

Project Title

The title should be linked to the objectives or specific department/business being studied in the syllabus. The title should be carefully structured, as in some instances some were too broad, and in a few cases, outside the scope of the syllabus.

Aims

The aims should state clearly and precisely what students are setting out to do. The aims must be directly related to the title. Some candidates listed personal aims such as ‘love for the subject’, or ‘to get a better grade’.

Functions

Most students scored full marks on this section once the department was identified. However, those students who scored zero gave functions of the business studied and not the department itself.

Correspondence

Generally, the letters presented were generated from students and entailed the relevant content. However, many students failed to follow the general principle in letter writing. Formatting was the main issue identified as it relates to letter style, for example, blocked or indented, date, line-spacing and appropriate matching of the salutation with the complimentary close. The salutation should give an indication of what form the complimentary close should take, for example, named person (Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr Brown — Yours sincerely; and unnamed person) (Dear Sir/Madam — Yours faithfully/respectfully). ‘Yours truly’ is not acceptable. In many instances, the students/writers did not sign the letter.

Methodology

Most students included a specimen of the data gathering instrument, but some did not clearly explain why the instrument was chosen and how it was used. In some cases, the instruments themselves were not properly constructed. Some students failed to include the data gathering instrument in the Appendix.

Questions

In most instances, this was done satisfactorily, although some of the questions submitted were not relevant and not related to the stated aims and title of the project. Students should avoid giving statements for questions and asking the same questions in different ways.

Schedule of Activities

Some Students failed to provide a table showing 10–12 activities. Invariably, the comments did not relate to the follow-up actions or decisions taken.

Regulations/Policies

From the responses given in this area, it was evident that several students had difficulty distinguishing between company policy and legislation governing the workplace. Legislation is a law passed and this should indicate the name of the law, the year and an explanation of the law. Some students failed to state how they became aware of the legislation. However, the health and safety practices observed section was done satisfactorily. Many students were able to give the staff rule but failed to state how they had to comply with the stated rule while carrying out the project.

Report Presentation

Many students did not meet the minimum requirement of 500–750, neither did some include graphs, charts or tables in the findings. It must be noted that a minimum of forty-one lines with font size 12 should average 533 words. Most students identified a major accomplishment, but failed to identify a problem-solving strategy.

Business Forms

In most instances, students included forms but some were not relevant to the department or the project. Students are required to include one blank document and one that is properly completed.

Bibliography

Many students failed to obtain the maximum marks allocated for this section as they did not complete the listing of resources used or internet site referenced.

Office Equipment

This was properly presented by most students in a four-column table with specified headings. However, the suitability for task should relate to the business and not how the equipment aided the researcher in the completion of the project.

Bibliography

Many students did not score full marks in this area as they failed to include the internet sites which should comprise the following:

Name of author, date posted, title of article, retrieved by, date retrieved and website address, for example, http...

Publications List: A specific format should be used consistently as in the case of the APA or MLA styles

Presentation

Most projects were satisfactorily presented, neatly arranged and accurately word processed. Marks ranged from 0 to 50. The mean score was 32.89, compared with 34.29 in June 2011.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Students should be given access to a reference copy of the current detailed mark scheme (as submitted in the marking exercise).

Mark schemes should not be condensed as moderators need to see how marks were allotted

Students should be consistently monitored throughout the project to ensure that the project is done correctly and that the stipulated guidelines in the current syllabus are being pursued.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

JANUARY 2013

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The Office Administration examination is offered in January and May/June each year. In January 2013, some 1 059 candidates sat the examination compared with the 2012 sitting when 1 349 candidates wrote the examination. Approximately 85 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I–III compared with 83 per cent in 2012. There were specific areas of weakness which are addressed in the detailed comments on individual questions.

Three papers were offered to ensure broad coverage of the syllabus and accessibility to a wider range of the candidate population. The objectives tested were chosen from all the modules. The papers offered are

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Paper 02 – Short Answer

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

Paper 01 consisted of 60 multiple choice items covering the entire syllabus. The items were set to cover Knowledge of content areas and Application of the knowledge. The overall mean was 35.06 compared with 36.40 for January 2012. Marks ranged from 10 to 57 out of a maximum available score of 60. Performance this year was consistent with that of 2012.

Paper 02 also assessed Knowledge and Application of procedures and processes associated with specialized office activities and routines. The paper consisted of eight questions which were further divided into 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. Candidates were required to answer two questions from Section II. In total, they were required to answer six questions from this paper. The overall mean for this paper was 39.88 compared with 40.69 in 2012. Marks ranged from 0 to 73 out of a maximum of 90.

Paper 032 took the form of a written examination that targeted private candidates who would not have had the opportunity to complete SBA projects as school candidates. The paper consisted of ten short, structured essay-type questions and was designed to test candidates' ability to apply their knowledge to the interpretation of a case using content from Module XII, Recruitment and Orientation; and to a lesser extent, on Modules II and VII which deal with communication and Human Resources, respectively.

It was evident from the performance on this paper that some areas continue to challenge candidates and in the final analysis affected their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 33.40, an increase over the 27.39 in 2012. Marks ranged from 4 to 46 out of a maximum of 50.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Section I

Section I which comprised four questions, was compulsory, and each question was worth 15 marks.

Question 1

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- the functions of the general administrative office
- the knowledge and skills required to satisfy the requirements for a job in the reprographics department and their ability to compose a memorandum.

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 6.30.

For Part (a), candidates were required to state some functions of the general administrative office. Generally, candidates were able to identify the three functions requested and gave responses such as: *receiving, processing and disseminating information; presenting data; and ensuring organizational and legal obligations.*

In Part (b), candidates were asked to state four advantages of working in an office that has centralized its services. Most candidates gave acceptable responses such as: *better supervision of staff by management; increased productivity through specialized, skilled, and efficient staff; encourages teamwork; and furniture can be arranged and rearranged easily.*

Part (c) required candidates to write a memo, the body of which should show their understanding of the functions of the reprographics department and the knowledge and skills required by a worker in this department. Many candidates were able to state the skills required such as: *ability to operate different kinds of machines; time management; communication; and literacy/numeracy.* However, only a few candidates alluded to the *knowledge* segment, such as: *quality/quantity required; how quickly information is required; and whether there is need for copies at a later date.* Some candidates were not able to use the correct format for a memo.

Question 2

This question tested candidates' understanding of the functions carried out by the records management clerk, the resources available for use and activities carried out by the clerk on a day-to-day basis. Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 8.66.

Part (a) required candidates to state one purpose for which a records management clerk may use different reference materials in the office. Except for the use of the post office guide, most candidates were able to state the purpose of the reference materials given.

In Part (b), candidates were required to identify three items that must be included on an agenda for a regular business meeting. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving correct responses such as: *call to order, apologies, minutes of the last meeting, new business and adjournment.*

Part (c) required candidates to prepare an itinerary for an employer. This part of the question was generally well done. The main area of weakness was that some candidates did not present the itinerary in a logical sequence. Some candidates failed to correctly convert the time to the 24-hour clock. The 24-hour clock should be written, for example, 0800 hours; 1200 hours; 1530 hours – with no colon (:) between the figures or 'a.m.' or 'p.m.' indications.

Question 3

This question tested candidates' understanding of the use of different communication devices and options available to a records management clerk. Marks ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 9.09.

For Part (a), candidates were required to identify some steps that should be taken when transferring funds electronically. The majority of candidates provided correct responses which include:

- visiting the institution where money transfer is legally done
- collecting and completing the relevant form(s)
- presenting cash/debit/credit card to teller
- collecting customer copy of the form from the teller

For Part (b), candidates were required to differentiate between types of telephone calls. This part of the question was not done satisfactorily. Candidates failed to state the main differences for:

- *station-to-station call* — where the caller dials a number directly without the assistance of the operator. This type of call is usually less costly than *person-to-person* which is an operator assisted call. Usually, there is a three minute, plus a one minute surcharge for the *person-to-person call*.
- *call waiting*, on the other hand, alerts the user of an incoming call while on the same line with another caller. With *call forwarding*, incoming calls can be transferred or forwarded to another office, house or mobile if someone is unavailable to take the call on that line.

For Part (c), candidates were required to demonstrate an understanding of the protocol a record management clerk should observe in using a personal cellphone while at work and to demonstrate the use of an appropriate letter format. This part of the question was satisfactorily done by most candidates. Some, however, did not seem to understand the difference between the return and the inside addresses and so placed them incorrectly. Some candidates failed to put the date in an appropriate place given the format of the letter that was used while others did not use a matching complimentary close with the salutation used.

Question 4

This question tested candidates' understanding of the appropriate behaviour a receptionist should display while on the job, some record keeping methods that the receptionist should use and ways of storing company records. Marks ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 6.54.

For Part (a), candidates were to identify reasons a company might decide to microfiche records. Some popular responses were: *reduces filing space, inactive information can be saved, and material can be retained for a long time.*

For Part (b), candidates were required to give attributes that the receptionist should display at the reception area. Most candidates performed well in this section, giving correct responses such as: *be polite/respectful/friendly to all visitors; be calm and patient when dealing with hostile and aggressive customers; the use of initiative; well-spoken/pleasant; and well organized.*

For Part (c), candidates were asked to state the most appropriate filing classification/method that should be used in five given situations involving numerical, alphabetical, subject, chronological and geographical filing. Many candidates failed to score full marks on this part of the question, invariably earning three marks at most.

For Part (d), candidates were to make entries in a reception register for three visitors. This part of the question was satisfactorily done.

Section II

The questions in this section were optional. Candidates were required to attempt any two of four questions from this section.

Question 5

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- the rules governing the use of office equipment
- the purpose of some documents used by the Human Resources Department
- how to prepare a Statement of Account
- how to apply special discounts

This was the most popular among the optional questions. It had a mean of 5.65 and marks ranged from 0 to 13.

For Part (a), candidates were to list rules that an employee should observe when using office equipment. This part of the question was satisfactorily done with candidates giving correct responses such as: *report malfunctioning or faulty equipment without delay to the supervisor or maintenance officer; read instructions before operating new equipment; and switch off machines when not in use.*

For Part (b), candidates were required to state the purpose of different documents used by the Human Resources Department. This part of the question was not satisfactorily done.

Candidates failed to identify purposes such as:

- The appraisal form is used as a method of identifying areas for staff development; a method of evaluating progress/performance; or to establish performance standards.
- The job description is to identify duties/functions/responsibilities of the position in the company; describe lines of communication; or indicate the right person for the job.
- The contract of employment is to specify the expectations of the employer; give collective agreements/terms and conditions of contract that govern employment, and specify the requirements of the employee.

Part (c) required candidates to use the information given to prepare a Statement of Account and to calculate special discount which was due to the customer. This part of the question was not satisfactorily done by some candidates as they failed to insert the correct entries under the debit and credit columns and to calculate the correct outstanding balance and payment.

Question 6

This question tested candidates'

- knowledge of the duties performed by the clerk in the Purchasing Office
- knowledge of the advantages of standing orders and credit cards
- ability to interpret the information on a bank statement
- ability to prepare a bank reconciliation statement.

This was the least popular of the optional questions. The marks ranged from 0 to 11 and the mean was 3.09. This question had the lowest mean on the optional section.

For Part (a), candidates were required to list duties performed by the clerk in the Purchases Office. For the most part, candidates gave correct responses such as: *preparing and processing requisitions; filing purchase orders and records; and liaising with other departments.*

For Part (b) (i), candidates were required to define the term standing order. Most candidates failed to define the term correctly. An acceptable definition of a standing order is: *an order given to the bank by the account holder to transfer a fixed sum of money to other bank accounts or to other business accounts at regular intervals.*

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were to state two advantages of using a credit card. This part of the question was satisfactorily done and correct responses such as *eliminates the need to carry around cash; allows for purchases on the internet; and payment is deducted at a later time* were given.

In Part (c) (i), candidates were required to interpret some transactions as they appear in the bank statement and the cash book. The majority of candidates were unable to interpret correctly the standing order, showed a lack of knowledge in recoding unpresented cheques, late lodgments, and transactions in the cash book.

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were to use the bank statement and cash book to prepare the bank reconciliation statement, starting with the bank balance. Most candidates who attempted this question failed to do this part of the question. Those who attempted it, performed poorly.

Question 7

This question tested candidates' understanding of the operations of the Sales and Marketing Department and the duties of the records management clerk in this office. The marks ranged from 0 to 12, and the mean was 5.80.

In Part (a), candidates were required to identify pieces of equipment that are used in the Sales and Marketing Department. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving correct responses such as: *calculator, cash register, AV equipment, and computer/printer/bar code.*

Part (b) required candidates to state the importance of keeping an updated mailing list in the Marketing Department. This part of the question was fairly well done as candidates were able to give correct responses such as: *easy to retrieve and update customers' names, update customers with current products or information, and maintain efficiency in the department.*

For Part (c) (i), candidates were required to identify some malpractices which are likely to occur in the Sales and Marketing Department. Those candidates who attempted this question gave correct responses such as:

- Inaccurate recording of stocks purchased
- Theft/unrecorded stocks taken from store
- Conflict of interest
- Lack of proper security of store room
- Deterioration
- Reorder levels not checked frequently

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were asked to suggest two stock control methods that could be used to overcome the problems of theft by employees and deterioration. This part of the question presented a challenge to candidates as many of them failed to give correct responses. Expected responses include:

- Theft by employees: perpetual/periodic/regular stock control
- Deterioration: stocktaking should be carried out on a regular basis/interval in order to monitor expired/obsolete stock and stock no longer in demand on the market
- The FIFO method and regular stocktaking could be done, using the running balance.

Question 8

This question tested candidates' understanding of the operations of the Factory Office and procedures for completing the forms used in this office. Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 6.02, the highest in this section.

For Part (a), candidates were to identify some duties that should be performed by the clerk in the Factory Office. For the most part, candidates gave correct responses such as: *progress chasing, liaising with other departments; maintaining time cards for factory workers, and planning delivery schedules.*

Part (b) required candidates to identify information that is found on a consignment note. This part of the question was done satisfactorily as correct responses were generated such as: *name/address of consignee/consignor; description, quantity of or weight of the consignment and terms of delivery.*

For Part (c) (i), candidates were required to calculate weekly gross and net pay for an employee. Most candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question.

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were to use the information obtained from Part (i) to prepare the weekly cheque for the employee. This part was well done by most candidates who attempted it.

Paper 032 — Alternative to School-Based Assessment

A short case was presented and candidates were required to read and respond to ten structured questions relating to this case. This case was developed mainly from Module XII, Recruitment and Orientation; and to a lesser extent from Module II, Communication and Module VII, Human Resources. All questions were set at the Application level. This paper was worth 50 marks.

The case revolved around an employee who was working at her first job in the Purchasing Department of a large manufacturing company. She believed that she had acquired sufficient experience in that position and as the company did not offer much prospects for upward mobility she decided to start her search for a new job. The questions were centred on the processes involved in the job hunt, from identifying a prospective job for which to apply to the evaluation after the probationary period of employment.

Marks ranged from 4 to 46 from a maximum of 50 marks. The mean score was 33.40.

Question 1

Part (a) required candidates to outline ways in which an advertisement could assist an individual in deciding on the job he/she wants. Candidates performed fairly well on this question and included correct responses such as:

- Provides detailed information of the job for assessing one's interest/scope for upward mobility
- Gives information on whether or not remuneration/pay is adequate
- Informs of attitudes/attributes/qualities/experience required
- Directs the applicant as to where to send applications/résumés
- Allows applicant to determine if the job is within a convenient location
- Indicates whether or not there are any fringe benefits
- Provides information on qualifications and skills required

Part (b) required candidates to give reasons a company may not want to employ relatives of employees. Those candidates who attempted this part of the question gave appropriate responses such as:

- The possibility that conflict may arise
- To avoid showing favouritism to relatives/nepotism
- To avoid employing persons with similar work-shy attitudes that may retard progress
- To encourage other persons with varying attitudes/knowledge/skills/attributes to invest in the company for increased efficiency

Question 2

Candidates were required to use the information given to prepare a draft of a résumé. They were to include appropriate headings, related details, as well as a career goal. Most candidates performed well on this question, using appropriate headings such as: *personal information, education, qualifications, experience, and hobbies*. However, many candidates failed to include a properly-worded career goal and a complete reference to include the person's name, position and contact information.

Question 3

This question required candidates to draft a cover letter to be attached to a résumé. The responses to this question were only fair as some candidates failed to write the return and inside addresses in the correct places; insert the current date; use appropriate salutation and matching complimentary close; cite attachment notation; and use correct grammar and spelling.

Question 4

Candidates were to suggest ways in which the prospective employee could prepare for the interview to ensure a greater chance of success. Most candidates were able to give two correct responses to include:

- Make sure that her résumé matches company's expectations
- Wear appropriate attire and observe protocol
- Conducted research on the company and its operations
- Take along all original documents/portfolio/specimen required by the company
- Know success factors associated with company

Question 5

Candidates were to suggest articles of clothing a prospective employee should wear to an interview in order to appear business like.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question and gave correct responses such as: *shorts; slippers/sandals/shoes with straps; large earrings; tight/short revealing shorts/jeans; sun glasses on top of your heads and leggings.*

Question 6

Candidates were required to state questions the prospective employee could ask to increase his/her chance of getting a job. Most candidates were able to respond correctly and gave answers such as:

- What are the prospects for promotion?
- What exactly does the job entail?
- What arrangements are there for vacation?
- If given the job, how soon will I be able to start?
- Are there opportunities for training?

Question 7

For this question, candidates were required to draft a copy of an appropriate thank you note to be sent to the Human Resources Manager for an invitation to the interview.

The responses to this question were satisfactory. Some candidates included: a thank you comment using an appreciative tone. They mentioned the position interviewed for and ended the note with the signature of the applicant.

Question 8

This question required candidates to outline ways in which a welcome package can benefit a new employee. The question was satisfactorily done with candidates giving responses such as:

- Helps build one's information/knowledge base
- Encourages reading/communication/research skills
- Provides answers not generally given in an interview
- Gives information on organization's structure and social activities

Question 9

Candidates were required to recommend ways in which management could improve the working conditions for workers. This question was done satisfactorily. Candidates gave accepted responses such as:

- Pay keen attention to suitable environment to enable employees to increase efficiency
- Purchase ergonomically-friendly furniture
- Provide adequate office space for flexible movements
- Position computers/monitors/adjustable chairs to promote proper posture, maximum support and comfort
- Provide protective clothing to ensure safety and comfort

Question 10

Candidates were required to compose statements which could be used on an employee's job evaluation. Most candidates were able to compose statements on *desirable work attitudes* but encountered difficulty doing so for *confidentiality*.

For *confidentiality*, expected responses such as the following were not readily generated.

- Able to keep all work-related information private
- Files/information are not left unattended on desks or open to the public
- Records management equipment/information are securely locked or given passwords
- I am able to keep confidential information to myself
- Personal information about employees is not divulged to anyone

Responses given by candidates for *Desirable work attitudes* which were accepted included:

- Willing to assist others
- Punctual and regular in attendance
- Use initiative
- Not a clock watcher
- Pleasant/courteous/polite
- Take corrections/advice without being offended
- Good team player/flexible

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is need for continued exposure to Paper 2 and 032 type questions and for candidates to be guided by the syllabus, recommended texts and support materials in order to ensure better results.
- Candidates should visit the CXC website and read comments presented in the subject reports to assist them in identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- Candidates should practise accounts-type questions such as bank reconciliation statements, statement of accounts as well as filling out forms accurately, since these are some of the areas of poor performance.
- In responding to questions, candidates should note key words/concepts to guide them in presenting information in a logical and organized manner.

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

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

May/June 2013

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The Office Administration examination is offered in January and May/June of each year. This year, approximately 18,000 candidates registered to sit the June examination. This number represents a decrease from last year when more than 19,600 candidates registered for the examination. Approximately, 78 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I–III. Last year a similar proportion of candidates obtained these grades.

The Office Administration examination comprises four papers of which candidates are required to sit three:

Paper 01 – Multiple choice

Paper 02 – Short answer

Paper 031 – The School-Based Assessment (SBA).

Paper 032 — The Alternative to the SBA

Paper 032 is normally done by candidates who do not have the supervision needed to carry out the SBA. This year marks the last May/June of this examination, which is based on the 2004 Office Administration syllabus. The revised syllabus will be assessed in June 2014.

The details of each paper along with candidates' performance on the different papers and the specific strengths and weaknesses observed during the marking exercises are addressed in the report below.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 — Multiple choice

Paper 01 consisted of 60 multiple choice items covering the entire syllabus. The items were set to cover Knowledge of content areas and Application of the knowledge. The overall mean was 32.93 or 65 per cent compared with 34.64 or 58 per cent for May/June 2012. Marks ranged from a minimum of zero to 58.

Paper 02 — Short Answer

Paper 02 assessed Knowledge of the syllabus content and Application of this knowledge to the procedures and processes associated with specialized office activities and routines. The paper consisted of eight questions which were further arranged in 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. Candidates were required to answer **two** questions from Section II. In total, they were required to answer **six** questions from this paper. The mean on this Paper was 42 out of 90 or 47 per cent. Marks ranged from zero to 88. Each question on this paper was worth a maximum of 15 marks.

Section 1 — Compulsory Questions

Question 1

This question was designed to test the candidates’

- knowledge of the purposes of equipment that are used in general and specialized office work
- understanding of the importance of the office worker’s word processing and time management skills in the development of an organization
- understanding of the benefits of excellent interpersonal skills in creating a harmonious working environment
- understanding of the types of responses suitable for some questions which are likely to be asked in an interview.

The mean of 9.24 or 62 per cent for this question was the highest in this section. Scores ranged from zero to 15

For Part (a), candidates were required to state the purpose of the guillotine, risograph and computer, in general and specialized office work. Generally, candidates were able to identify the purpose of at least two of the pieces of equipment, and gave responses such as:

- *Guillotine: used to cut/trim paper/cards to required sizes*
- *Risograph: used to scan documents; copy images; high-speed printing*
- *Computer: electronic equipment that accepts raw data and processes into information; stores and displays information when required*

In Part (b) (i), candidates were asked to define the term ‘skill’. This part of the question was satisfactorily done as candidates scored at least one of the maximum two marks.

Part (b) (ii) required candidates to state one reason ‘word processing’ and ‘time management’ skills are important for office workers to develop. Most candidates gave acceptable responses for ‘time management’ such as: *to help office workers to use their time well and to prioritize activities crucial to achieving the organization’s goals*. However, ‘word processing’ posed a challenge to many candidates as expected responses such as: *to create business documents with the use of a computer on a timely basis, and to design or develop documents in a professional, acceptable and legible manner for decision-making and information sharing*, were rarely given.

Part (c) required candidates to outline two ways in which a clerical worker could use interpersonal skills to settle disputes and conflicts, and to help in creating harmonious relationships in the work place. Most candidates were able to score one mark in this part of the question. In many instances, they were able to identify skills that the worker possessed but did not state how the worker could use the skills to settle issues at the workplace.

Part (d) required candidates to write two appropriate responses each for three questions asked in an interview. This part of the question was well done. Some candidates, however, gave responses pertaining to personal goals instead of career goals for one of the questions.

Question 2

This question tested candidates' knowledge of the work environment of a receptionist and also required them to apply this knowledge to resolve issues which are likely to occur in an office. The mean on this question was 8.37 or 56 per cent.

Part (a) required candidates to identify one use each of bond and parchment paper. Most candidates failed to give an appropriate use of parchment paper. While *bond paper is generally used with letter/memo heads and to type and print the original of most documents, parchment paper is heavy quality paper used for /cards/posters/certificates/ as canvass for paintings.*

In Part (b), candidates were required to state three desirable attributes of a receptionist. Candidates performed well on this part of the question, giving correct responses such as: *punctuality, honesty, good deportment, respectfulness, cooperation and flexibility.*

Part (c) (i) required candidates to outline two guidelines that a receptionist should follow when taking telephone messages. This part of the question was unsatisfactorily done as many candidates gave guidelines for taking telephone calls, or responses relating to telephone etiquette.

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were to indicate the appropriate actions a receptionist should take in each of the different situations. Responses to this part of the question were appropriate in most instances.

In the case of the angry customer, candidates were able to indicate appropriate responses such as: *remain calm and be tactful, offer help or refer caller to someone else who can help, be respectful and exercise patience/empathy.*

In the second scenario, where the receptionist kept getting a busy signal each time a number was dialled, candidates gave unacceptable responses such as:

- wait and try to make the call again
- use the ring-back service until your phone rings and then make connection to person needed
- ask the operator to break in if it is an emergency and ask person if he/she wishes to take your call
- or simply inform the manager of the busy signal

Where the receptionist dialled the wrong number candidates indicated correctly that proper telephone etiquette requires that *the receptionist politely inform the caller of the fact and apologize rather than hang up; verify phone number and re-try.*

Where the receptionist got a recorded message most candidates gave unacceptable responses such as listen to the instructions or information given and act accordingly.

Question 3

This question tested candidates' knowledge and understanding of:

- paging devices, fax machines and the Internet as a means of telecommunication
- the uses of a postage book
- the importance of time zone differences when trading globally with customers
- modern equipment used in a centralized mail room and how each item of equipment identified, could increase efficiency of outgoing mail

For Part (a), candidates were required to state one use each of a paging device, fax machine and the Internet. The mean was 6.68 or 46 per cent. In this section of the question, marks ranged from zero to three, with many candidates scoring at least two marks.

Some candidates used the same words in stating the use of the machine, for example, the fax machine is used to fax letters and memos.

Part (b) required candidates to state two uses of a postage book. The majority of candidates scored one mark with most giving correct responses such as: to record the value of stamps purchased or used, to find the value of stamps remaining, and to record the number of each category of mail posted daily. Some candidates confused the *postage book* with the *post office guide*.

Part (c) required candidates to state two reasons understanding time zone differences is important to the work of the receptionist when there is the need to make frequent telephone contacts with customers overseas. This part of the question was satisfactorily done by most candidates. They gave correct responses such as: *to place telephone calls to foreign countries at appropriate times and negotiate travel arrangements to make maximum use of time*.

In Part (d) (i), candidates were required to identify four modern pieces of equipment that are suitable for the new centralized mail room. Many candidates identified modern equipment in an office, instead of the mail room or, equipment that originated from the traditional type office instead of mentioning machines such as: *sorter, digital scale; franking; addressing; collating; folding; sealing or fax machine and the computer*.

Part (d) (ii) required candidates to outline how each piece of equipment identified at (d) (i) could increase the efficiency of outgoing mail. This part of the question was satisfactorily done as candidates who gave correct responses in (d) (i) were able to state the correct benefit of each machine identified.

Question 4

This question was designed to test the candidates' knowledge relating to a records management system. The mean was 5.71 or 38 per cent was the lowest for Section I.

For Part (a), candidates were required to state three classifications of a records management system. This part of the question was done unsatisfactorily. The word 'classifications' was interpreted as 'characteristics' by some candidates. Correct responses such as *alphabetic/geographical/subject/chronological*, as well as *numerical/electronic and alpha-numerical*, were not considered by many candidates.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were required to define the term ‘archiving’. Many candidates gave the definition for the word ‘achieving’. The expected response should have indicated that “*Archiving is the process of moving data that is no longer actively used to a separate data storage device for long-term retention or the transfer of paper records that are not being used to a storage room*”.

Part (b) (ii) required candidates to identify two types of microfilming. Popular among the responses given for this part of the question was ‘microfiche’. It appeared as if candidates were unfamiliar with the other types such as: film, aperture card and microfiche.

For Part (c) (i), candidates were to suggest three factors that should be considered in using a centralized filing system to improve records management. This part of the question was generally well done as correct responses such as: *physical space required, ease in using centralized filing system, cost, easy access for retrieval and modern storage equipment*, were considered.

Part (c) (ii), required candidates to suggest one disadvantage of implementing a centralized filing system. This part of the question was also done satisfactorily. Popular among the correct responses were: *time factor in retrieving documents, misplaced files can take a longer time to retrieve, confidentiality may be breached, and total loss in case of disaster, such as fire*.

Section II – Optional Questions

Candidates were required to attempt any two of four questions from this section.

Question 5

This question tested candidates’ knowledge of the principles and processes used in the accounts office. This question was one of the two most popular in the section. The mean was 6.39 or 43 per cent.

For Part (a), candidates were required to list three functions of the accounts office. This part of the question was done satisfactorily, with candidates giving correct responses such as: *preparation of payroll, collection of accounts, preparation of audit, and dealing with departments’ procedures for making and receiving payment through different types of bank accounts*. The weaker candidates listed accounting terms rather than functions of the accounts office.

Part (b) required candidates to define the different types of cheques. This part of the question was unsatisfactorily done. The majority of candidates failed to correctly define ‘counter’ and ‘certified’ cheques, hence, most earned the mark for only the post-dated cheque. They correctly stated that this type of cheque is *made payable for some time in the future* or, not until the date written on it materializes.

On the other hand, the counter cheque seemed unfamiliar to most candidates. This cheque is *made out to the payee who must present some form of identification for payment. This cheque must be endorsed in front of the teller before it is honoured*.

The certified or manager’s cheque is *(guaranteed and honoured by the bank. This cheque is signed by the manager and a charge is made by the bank.)*

Part (c) (i) required the candidates to calculate a discount and prepare a cheque for the amount calculated.

This part of the question was fairly well done. The weaker candidates calculated only the total amount due on the invoice, but failed to calculate the ten per cent settlement discount if the amount on the invoice was paid in seven days. Hence, they earned only one of two marks for this part of the question.

Many candidates used the incorrect date and not the one specified in the question for writing up the cheque. In many instances, candidates could not differentiate between the payee and the drawer. Some candidates failed to write the correct amount in both words and figures on the cheque.

Part (c) (ii) required the candidates to state two consequences if the amount on a cheque did not agree in words and figures. This part of the question was done satisfactorily by most candidates, as they gave common responses such as: *cheque would be dishonoured/bounced or returned, cheque would have to be re-written/replaced, and an additional bank charge would incur to the drawer.*

Question 6

This question was designed to test the candidates' knowledge of principles and processes which apply in the operations of the purchasing department. The mean of 5.52 or 37 per cent for this question was the lowest in this section.

For Part (a), candidates were required to state three duties of a purchasing clerk. For the most part, candidates gave correct responses such as: *preparing and processing purchase requisitions; filing of purchase orders and records; and maintaining stock records and database of suppliers.*

For Part (b), candidates were required to define the terms: tender, enquiry and quotation, as used in the purchasing department. Most candidates failed to define the terms correctly. An expected definition of tender was: *'a formal offer such as a bid, a notice from a seller to offer money or goods for settlement of a contract'*. The weaker candidates gave the definition of tender to be 'a person who works in a bar or restaurant', or literally, 'not tough or hard, delicate'.

Many candidates attempted to give the correct responses for 'enquiry', which is: *the first stage in a transaction, the enquiry serves to inform the prospective supplier of what is required and specifies delivery and any packaging requirements.* The quotation on the other hand, *is sent to the potential buyer by firms interested in supplying the goods required; it specifies prices, discounts and delivery of carriage terms.*

For Part (c) (i), candidates were to record given transactions in the petty cash book at the end of the month, and restore the imprest to the beginning balance of \$120.00. In this part of the question, many candidates did not demonstrate a clear understanding of the required steps to be taken to balance the petty cash book. Hence, they encountered difficulty in restoring the imprest to the beginning balance of \$120.00.

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were required to state two consequences of abusing the petty cash fund. The majority of candidates were able to score at least one mark in this part of the question as they gave correct responses such as: *one would be liable to face disciplinary measures, no records would be provided of money spent, shortage of fund to purchase small items, accounting practices would be violated, or person responsible for the fund would be held culpable.*

Question 7

This question tested candidates' ability to apply knowledge relating to the procedures and processes used in stock management. This was the least popular question in the section. The mean of 7.59 or 51 per cent was the highest for the questions in this section.

In Part (a), candidates were required to state the acronyms for LIFO and FIFO in full and explain their meanings. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving desired responses for LIFO, that is, *Last In, First Out: Materials/Stocks received last are issued first and unit cost will be based on the most recent price.* FIFO – *First In, First Out: Materials/Stocks received first are issued first and unit cost will be based on the first price.*

Part (b) required candidates to identify two reasons for the importance of monitoring stock levels. Candidates who scored full marks on this part of the question gave correct responses such as: *not having capital tied up in excess stock; to avoid spoilage, goods becoming obsolete; to prevent pilferage; and to control insurance costs especially if premium is based on average volume in stock over a period.*

For Part (c), candidates were required to use the information given to draft a quotation in letter format to a named person. This part of the question presented a challenge to many candidates who failed to present the information given in an appropriate letter format to include:

- name of the document
- return address
- quotation number and date
- inside address
- salutation relating to the complimentary close
- body of letter divided into paragraphs based on contents
- signature, followed by job position

Question 8

This question was designed to test candidates' knowledge of: the functions of the staff in the factory office and how to complete the documents used in this office. This question was the most popular in the section and the mean was 6.88 or 46 per cent.

For Part (a), candidates were to state three functions of the staff in the factory office. For the most part, candidates stated functions common to other offices instead of specific to the factory office. The candidates who responded favourably to this part of the question gave answers such as:

- *monitor quality control*
- *coordinate and organize production*
- *maintain stock control*
- *maintain records/preparation of job cards*
- *enforce health and safety regulations*
- *inspecting samples of products to ensure they conform to high standards and specifications*

Part (b) required candidates to list three documents that are used in the factory office. Many candidates listed just about any document, except those unique to the factory office. Favourable responses to this part of the question included:

- *planning master*
- *job/cost/quality control cards*
- *time/clock cards*
- *progress advice*
- *accident report*
- *production order*

For Part (c) (i), candidates were required to complete the advice note, sign and date it. Most candidates responded favourably to this part of the question by completing the document satisfactorily from the data given.

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were to state two consequences to the purchaser in the event that goods are dispatched and the advice note is omitted. Few candidates were able to state the consequences and submitted responses such as:

- advice note is needed to complete the invoice which is important for making payment
- no identity to match corresponding invoice
- the purchaser would not be aware of the arrival of goods and no arrangements
- would be made to collect them

Recommendations

The examining committee would like to recommend the following approaches to teachers.

- Place greater emphasis on the correct format for letters and other documents.
- Vary teaching methodology to include the integrated approach to learning Office Administration. Cross-disciplinary collaboration and teaching involving teachers of English Language, Principles of Accounts, Electronic Document Preparation and Management and Office Administration could lead to greater articulation and reinforcement of concepts, procedures and processes.
- Demonstrate the use of types of paper/equipment/documents used in the various departments/offices.
- Emphasize the use of the postage book, petty cash book, types of cheques, and key terms/jargons used in the various offices and banks.
- Pay keen attention to the syllabus and to textbook content written by a variety of authors.
- Invite guest speakers and plan field trips to reinforce understanding of key areas, functions of workers in the different departments and documents and equipment used to enhance efficiency.

The committee wishes to recommend the following to candidates.

- Visit the CXC websites and read reports posted, join small study groups and network with teachers and peers.
- Make study schedules or timetables and sticks to them consistently and conscientiously, to help in preparing for the examination.

Paper 032 – Alternative to the SBA

This paper targeted private individuals who would not have the opportunity to complete SBA projects as school candidates. It took the form of a written examination designed to test the candidates' ability to use their personal experiences of routine office activities acquired through observation or from performing the actual office tasks as real employees.

The paper consisted of ten short, structured essay-type questions, based on an office case entitled, 'The Golden Anniversary'. Question 8 contained sub-sections – Parts (a) and (b). For this examination, the case focused mainly on Module VI of the syllabus which covers Travel Arrangements and to a lesser extent, on Modules II and X which deal with Communication, and Sales and Marketing, respectively.

It was noted in this paper that some areas continued to challenge candidates and affected their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 22.13 or 44 per cent, compared with 30.69 or 61 per cent in 2012. Marks ranged from 28 to 44 out of a maximum of 50.

The case entitled: *The Golden Anniversary*, summarized the following main points:

The Caribbean School of Excellence which is located in Antigua will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in November 2013.

To celebrate this golden anniversary, the school organized a week-long series of events by a special committee who will engage its past students to ensure a memorable and successful celebration.

An administrative clerk has been hired in the Alumni Office to market the week of activities, manage event registration, organize travel plans, provide information to past students and maintain the 50th Anniversary Alumni website.

The committee has been meeting over nine months to plan the schedule of activities and at the last meeting, has agreed to sensitize the general public and past students through newspaper advertisements about the upcoming week of events

Question 1

Based on given information, candidates were required to draft a newspaper advertisement that could be used to highlight the week of activities. A school logo/emblem should be included in the advertisement. Marks ranged from 0 to 6 and the mean was 5.14 or 86 per cent.

Candidates performed well on this question. They transferred successfully key information presented in the stimulus material to the advertisement and created suitable logos/school emblems. Marks were awarded for acceptable responses such as

- *name of school and event being celebrated*
- *dates for week of events*
- *participants to celebrate at designated venue*
- *early bird bookings to receive discount*
- *contact information*
- *design of appropriate logo.*

Question 2

From the finalized list of activities, candidates were required to design a programme to be featured on the alumni website to promote the week of activities. Marks ranged from 0 to 3 and the mean was 1.85 or 62 per cent

The candidates who performed favourably on this question gave the three main areas of information, which included: school, event and place of celebration; week/date of activities, and listed activities. The weaker candidates were unable to transfer the information in a systematic manner to resemble a programme.

Question 3

This question required candidates to state four items of information that the administrative clerk should be prepared to provide to past students requesting travel information. Marks ranged from 0 to 4 and the mean was 1.76 or 44 per cent.

The responses to this question were fair, as some candidates failed to provide information relating specifically to travel arrangements. The candidates who performed well at this question submitted responses such as:

- *passport/visa requirements/health certificate*
- *time zone information*
- *airline schedule*
- *hotel information*
- *transportation arrangement*
- *cost/discount.*

Question 4

Candidates were required to identify four pieces of information the administrative clerk would need to get in order to make suitable hotel reservation for them. Marks ranged from 0 to 4 and the mean was 2.08 or 52 per cent.

Most candidates were able to give two correct responses to include:

- *special physical needs*
- *special dietary needs*
- *rooming preferences, for example, single, double*
- *rooming list*
- *length of stay/arrival/departure dates*
- *payment options.*

Question 5

Candidates were required to calculate and show working for the total cost of the rooms for the group. Marks ranged from 0 to 7 and the mean was 2.10 or 30 per cent.

Candidates who received full marks for this question were in the minority as most candidates were not able to calculate parts of the question and show their working in a logical manner.

Question 6

Candidates were required to draft a letter to the manager of Paradise Suites to confirm telephone reservation for twenty double rooms and ten single rooms for three nights, given arrival and departure dates. Marks ranged from 0 to 8 and the mean was 4.20 or 51 per cent.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question. The main areas of weakness were in the formatting of the letter – placement of return and inside addresses, date, use of salutation and matching complimentary close, use of signatory and post of job, and errors in the body of contents.

Question 7

For this question, candidates were required to state four pieces of information to include on the label for participants' travel folders. This was worth 4 marks. Marks ranged from 0 to 4 and the mean was 0.96 or 24 per cent.

Generally, the responses to this question were unsatisfactory, as many candidates stated information relevant to the travel folder, but not for the label of the travel folder. Those who performed well on this question submitted responses such as: *logo, date of event, name of event, venue, and name of individual.*

Question 8

This question tested candidates' understanding of time at places in different time zones. Marks ranged from 0 to 5 and the mean was 0.72 or 14 per cent. Part (a) required candidates to calculate the departure time for a participant who was travelling from London at 7:00 a.m. to Miami, given that London is five hours ahead of the time in Miami, Florida. This part of the question was satisfactorily done as many candidates were able to give the correct response as 2:00 a.m.

Part (b) required candidates to use information given to prepare an itinerary and express the times given using the 24- hour clock. This question presented a challenge to most candidates, who were unable to convert times to the 24-hour clock and to present an appropriate format of an itinerary.

Question 9

For this question, candidates were to give three items which must be included in the programme for the evening's proceedings of the awards ceremony. Marks ranged from 0 to 3 and the mean was 1.55 or 52 per cent.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question, submitting responses such as: *welcome/introduction; guest speaker's address; dinner; vote of thanks; entertainment; list of awardees, and national anthem/school song*. In some instances, however, the grammar and language were inappropriate.

Question 10

Candidates were required to recommend two questions each for the headings given, to be included on an evaluation instrument for participants. Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 6 and the mean was 2.80 or 47 per cent.

Many candidates experienced difficulty in expressing the questions they composed in the correct tense, and using correct punctuation. Examples of recommended questions for the three areas are as follows:

Areas to be Evaluated	Questions to be asked
Travel Arrangements	<i>1. Did the travel arrangements meet your expectations? 2. Did you encounter problems with your travel scheduling? 3. Was ground transportation from home to hotel adequate?</i>
Hotel Accommodation	<i>1. Did the room assignment meet your requirements? 2. Were the facilities acceptable? 3. Was your stay at the hotel enjoyable</i>
Awards Dinner and Dance	<i>1. Was the programme too long? 2. Was the dinner enjoyable? 3. Was there adequate space on the dance floor?</i>

Recommendations

Candidates need to:

- Visit the CXC website and read comments presented in the subject reports to assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- Practise filling out forms/documents accurately and calculating discounts, since these are some of the areas of poor performance.
- Note key words in the examination questions which provide guidance in presenting information in a logical and organized manner.

Paper 031 — School Based Assessment (SBA)

The school-based assessment component of the Office Administration course is designed to assist candidates in acquiring specific competencies for application in real-life situations. The research project is intended to develop in candidates the basic skills of research and requires them to collect data in a scientific manner.

The information gathered is compiled in a report and is assessed on three criteria: Preparation, Gathering Data, and Presentation with a weighting of 15, 15 and 20 marks, respectively. This paper was worth 50 marks. The mean was 35.38 or 71 per cent.

Criterion 1: Preparation

- Most candidates generated fairly good topics for their projects, but some topics were too wide and not clearly stated. In many instances, the title page lacked requisite elements such as title of the project and teacher's name.
- Candidates provided an appropriate table of contents (TOC), but there were instances where they did not number the pages in the project as indicated in the TOC.
- Some candidates failed to identify a specific department in the firm for their project, while others failed to provide aims that were consistent with the topic under investigation. There were times when aims were confused with functions, and vice versa.
- Most candidates included correspondence requesting permission to conduct the project. Nonetheless, they failed to provide an appropriate salutation which is aligned to an acceptable complimentary close. General layout and signatory were not presented in an acceptable manner.

Criterion 2: Gathering Data

- Most candidates provided a suitable specimen of a data-gathering instrument. Notwithstanding this, the explanations of the usage of the instrument were limited and justifications were not forthcoming.
- In many instances, candidates presented the five research questions but they were inconsistent with the aims, functions and topics under investigation.
- On many occasions, candidates failed to identify legislation governing the workplace. However, most were able to provide a health and safety practice they observed and a staff rule they had to comply with in carrying out the project.

Criterion 3: Presentation

- Most candidates produced a report consisting of findings, challenges and problem-solving strategies. Rarely did candidates' reports include the relevant charts, tables and graphs.
- Most candidates provided a business document but it was sometimes inconsistent with the topic/department under investigation.
- In some cases the four-column table which included the equipment used in the firm, provided general uses of the equipment identified instead of specific uses of the equipment by the department studied.
- Generally, candidates did not follow the guidelines for preparing the bibliography.
- Most candidates scored satisfactory marks on the overall presentation of the project.

Major Strengths: Neat and well arranged, word-processed projects.

Weaknesses:

- Failure to attach to the project, a current mark scheme indicating how the projects were marked
- Failure to state how candidates became aware of the legislation regulating the workplace
- Failure to state the department of the organization under study
- Incorrect sources of information
 - Reference for persons interviewed: date, place and job title were not included
 - Incorrect use of publication styles, namely APA or MLA or other approved styles
 - Reference for Internet sites: address on the website, name of authors and organizations were not correct.

Recommendations to Teachers

- Encourage students to pay keen attention to detail in order to earn scores close to, or at the maximum marks allocated.
- Monitor students consistently throughout the project to ensure that the project is done correctly, It represents the candidates' own work, and that the stipulated guidelines in the current syllabus are being pursued.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

JANUARY 2014

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The Office Administration examination is offered in January and May/June each year. In January 2014, 1,279 candidates sat the examination compared with 1,059 in the 2013 sitting. Approximately, 76 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I–III compared with 86 per cent in 2013. The areas of weakness will be addressed in the detailed comments section covering the various papers.

Three papers were offered at the General Proficiency level to ensure broad coverage of the syllabus and accessibility to a wider range of the candidate population. The objectives tested were chosen from all the modules of the syllabus and examined for the last time as a new Office Administration syllabus will be tested for the first time in June 2014. The papers offered are as follows:

- Paper 01 — Multiple Choice
- Paper 02 — Short Answer
- Paper 032 — Alternative to School Based Assessment (SBA)

Paper 01 consisted of 60 multiple-choice items covering the entire syllabus. The items set covered knowledge of the content area and application of knowledge in the ratio 2:1. The overall mean was 35.31, compared with 34.49 for January 2013. Marks ranged from 11 to 59 out of a maximum available score of 60. Performance was consistent with that of 2013. Seventy-two per cent of the candidates scored at least 50 per cent of the total marks on this paper. Candidates performed better in Profile 2. The standard deviation was 9.17.

Paper 02 consisted of two sections. Section I comprised four compulsory questions covering Modules I–VI and Module XII. These questions were attempted by the majority of candidates.

Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Modules VII–XI. Candidates were required to answer two questions from Section II and, in total, six questions from Paper 02. This paper assessed knowledge and application of procedures, and processes associated with office routines and activities in the ratio 4:5.

The overall mean for this paper was 42.62 compared with 39.88 in 2013. Marks ranged from 1 to 72 out of a maximum of 90. The standard deviation was 11.91. The mean for Profile 1 was 18.8 out of 40 (47 per cent) and for Profile 2, 23.82 out of 50 (47.6 per cent). The marks for Profile 1 ranged from 0 to 34, while for Profile 2, 0–43. There are some areas that continue to pose difficulty to candidates and this is addressed under the section ‘Detailed Comments’.

Paper 032 targeted private individuals who would not have had the opportunity to complete SBA projects as school candidates. It took the form of a written examination designed to test the candidates' ability to use their personal experiences of routine office activities acquired through observation or from performing the actual office tasks as real employees.

The paper consisted of ten short, structured essay-type questions, based on an office case, with only one of the questions containing subsections – Parts (a) and (b). For this examination, the case focused mainly on Module VII of the syllabus which covers human resources (HR).

It was evident from the performance on this paper that some areas continue to challenge candidates and ultimately these affected their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 27.55 compared with 33.30 in 2013. Marks ranged from 0 to 48 out of a maximum of 50. The standard deviation was 7.92.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Section I: Compulsory Questions

Section I which comprised four questions was compulsory, and each question was worth 15 marks.

Question 1

This question tested candidates' understanding of:

- The term *organizational structure*
- How the size of a small business may affect the way it deploys its staff
- The purposes of specific office equipment
- Ways in which an employee may improve punctuality and regularity
- Ways in which the skills of operating a variety of office machines and the ability to solve problems can improve efficiency in the office

For Part (a) (i), candidates were asked to define the term *organizational structure*. Generally, candidates were able to define the term, giving at least a partial response such as 'lines of authority' and 'information flows between different levels of management'.

In Part (a) (ii), candidates were asked to describe how the size of a small business may affect the way it deploys its staff. In responding, many candidates referred to the layout of the office, instead of the effects on the way it deploys its staff, such as: *The small business will be less able to employ people to do specialist tasks, and that some workers will have to be responsible for several aspects of the operations, and will have to carry out multi-functional tasks.*

Part (b) required candidates to state the purpose of the shredder, overhead projector and the risograph. For the most part, candidates were able to state the purposes of these machines except the risograph which they alluded to as a form of visual communication or paper used to do mathematics.

In Part (c), candidates were given a scenario of an employee, who having been appraised at the end of the year, was given a low score for punctuality and regularity. Candidates were to suggest four ways in which the employee could improve in these areas.

For the most part, candidates were able to suggest realistic ways on how to practise good time management, indicating responses such as: *Retiring to bed early to rise early; Prioritizing personal work and working smartly, allowing enough travel time and ensuring a reliable transport system.*

Part (d) required candidates to outline ways in which the skills to operate a variety of office machines and the ability to solve problems can improve efficiency in the office. Most candidates were able to outline at least one way in which these skills were important such as: *Work is carried out with a degree of purpose and confidence, thereby increasing morale, output and efficiency; flexibility and multi-faceted ability allow for effective use of time, as well as interpersonal relationships are enhanced for team building, and decisions can be made more easily and independently.*

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 7.38, with standard deviation of 2.62.

Question 2

This question tested candidates' understanding of:

- The purpose of specific machines when dealing with outgoing mail in a large office
- Guidelines to follow when preparing to rent and operate a new franking machine
- The differences between an electronic mail and a facsimile
- How to write a report of an accident

Part (a) (i) required candidates to state the purposes of the sealing and addressing machines when dealing with outgoing mail in a large office. Most candidates were able to state the correct purposes of the machines, giving responses such as: *The sealing machine speeds up the sealing of envelopes, thus eliminating the manual wetting and folding of flaps, and the addressing machine is used to print addresses, bar codes and customized messages on labels and envelopes.*

In Part (a) (ii), candidates were required to list three guidelines the user should follow when preparing to rent and operate a new franking machine. This part of the question posed a great deal of difficulty for most candidates, as seen in the type of responses given. The following are some of the guidelines candidates could have cited:

- *Obtain authority from the postmaster General before starting to use the machine*
- *Make payments for postage in advance at a specified post office*
- *Break seals in the presence of an authorized officer of the post office*
- *Use franking machine only at the office or premises specified in the licence*
- *Frank postal packages according to postage machine regulations issued to the user upon the grant of the licence*
- *Keep machine in good condition; maintain regularly to ensure clear impressions and accuracy in recording*

In Part (b), candidates were required to state the difference between an electronic mail and a facsimile. This was generally well done as candidates clearly highlighted the differences of the electronic mail *as a system that enables users to transmit letters and other messages from one computer to another via the internet; while the facsimile transmits and reproduces documents over regular telephone lines.*

For Part (c), candidates were required to write a report of an accident they witnessed based on a scenario given. Whereas many candidates were able to write the report sequentially to include the relevant points, they lost marks that were awarded for:

- Appropriate title
- Use of relevant headings, such as Terms of Reference/Introduction, Body of Report, Conclusion/Actions taken
- Name of reporter and date
- Correct grammar and spelling

Marks ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 7.03; standard deviation was 2.12.

Question 3

This question tested candidates' understanding of:

- Duties a receptionist may be asked to perform
- Reasons a desk diary is a good reminder system
- Instances when a breach of confidentiality may arise at the workplace
- Appropriate filing systems and how to arrange clients' names as they would appear in those systems
- How to cross reference clients' names

For Part (a), candidates were required to list three duties a receptionist may be asked to perform. For the most part, the majority of candidates provided correct responses such as: *Receiving and screening visitors; keeping the reception register; operating the switchboard and re-directing visitors to other personnel.*

In Part (b), candidates were asked to state reasons a desk diary is a good reminder system. Performance was satisfactory as candidates stated reasons such as: *It contains information about appointments/activities to be done; it may be used as a reference; and it can be consulted for dates and times of appointments and actions to be taken.*

For Part (c), candidates were to give instances when a breach of confidentiality may arise at the workplace. For the most part, candidates gave correct responses such as: *Information of a confidential nature is given to someone in confidence, who later discloses the matter; files containing private and personal information are not stored in a secure place; information relating to one's salary or medical records are exposed; and employees disclose company's policies, procedures or information of a competitive nature.*

In Part (d) (i), candidates were required to create a filing system for a company which trades with international clients and arrange clients' names as they would appear in the filing system. While the majority of candidates was able to create a geographic filing

system and place clients' names according to their countries in alphabetic order, weaker candidates failed to identify the correct filing system and arrange countries' names in alphabetic order.

For Part (d) (ii), candidates were to show the cross-referencing order for the names of two of the newest clients. Many candidates failed to cross reference correctly. For example, the names Keisha Browne-Smith and Saleem Nherd, Nhurd should be cross referenced as follows:

Keisha Browne -
See Keisha Smith;

Saleem Nherd -
See Saleem Nhurd

Marks ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 6.85, with a standard deviation of 3.06.

Question 4

This question tested candidates' ability to:

- Define terms associated with meetings
- List types of monetary instruments, other than cash, used for overseas travel
- State types of services that are provided by travel agencies
- Prepare draft minutes for a chairperson

For Part (a), candidates were asked to define the terms *adjourn*, *chairperson* and *ex-officio*. Most candidates were able to define the terms *adjourn* and *chairperson* correctly, but failed to give the correct definition for *ex-officio* which is: *a person who is automatically a member of a committee or board by virtue of the office he holds and there is no need to elect the person.*

For Part (b) (i), candidates were required to list two types of monetary instruments, other than cash, that can be used for overseas travel. Most candidates performed well, giving correct responses such as: *Traveller's cheque; credit/Master/Visa card; letter of credit, and bank draft.*

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were to state two types of services that are provided by travel agencies. Most candidates performed well, invariably earning the two marks at most, giving responses such as: *Booking airline/ship seats and travel tickets; preparing flight*

itineraries for travellers; preparing travel documents, and recommending and making hotel reservations.

For Part (c), candidates were to use an appropriate format to prepare a draft of the minutes for the chairman from notes that were given to the secretary. Generally, this was unsatisfactorily done as candidates failed to:

- Head the document as ‘Draft Minutes for the Chairman’
- State the company’s name, place, date and time of meeting
- Use appropriate headings for each section such as: Minutes of Meeting; Present; Absent; Minutes of Previous Meeting; Matters Arising; New Business, Any Other Business; Adjournment, and Date of Next Meeting
- Include chairman’s signature and date
- Use an appropriate/acceptable format for writing minutes

Marks ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 6.17; standard deviation was 3.07.

Section II: Optional Questions

Candidates were required to attempt any two questions from this section.

Question 5

This question tested candidates’ understanding of:

- Methods of payments that can be made and received through the bank
- The difference between debit and credit notes
- How to complete a payroll form

For Part (a), candidates were to list four methods by which payments can be made and received through the bank. This was generally well done with candidates giving correct responses such as: *Cash; cheques; bank drafts; credit transfer; standing order; and cash dispenser/ATM.*

For Part (b), candidates were required to state the difference between a debit note and a credit note. This was fairly well done. Candidates who scored satisfactorily gave correct responses such as:

- *The debit note is a document made out by the seller whenever the customer is undercharged on an invoice, or a charge is made on a customer which increases his debt*
- *The credit note is issued by a seller to a customer to inform that the price quoted on an invoice has been reduced and his account has been credited. This can be due to an overcharge or if the goods were defective, insufficient, or lost/misplaced during transit.*

Part (c) required candidates to complete the payroll form given as an insert, by calculating and inserting all required information. Most candidates who attempted it did well displaying competence in using the payroll form to insert the correct period, calculate overtime rate, gross pay, PAYE, and net pay. Weaker candidates failed to calculate correctly.

This was the most popular of the optional questions. It was attempted by approximately 67 per cent of the candidates. Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 15 and the mean was 8.73, with a standard deviation of 3.51.

Question 6

This question tested candidates' ability to:

- Define terms used in the sales department
- List reference sources that a purchasing department may consult when acquiring goods and services
- Use the purchase requisition to complete an order
- Explain the effects a late requisition could have on a company's operations

For Part (a), candidates were required to define three terms used in the sales department. For the most part, candidates gave correct responses for the terms: *cash on delivery*, *discounts* and *errors and omissions excepted* (E & OE). Weaker candidates failed to give the correct definition for E & OE, which means that *the seller is entitled to make any change in the price quoted on the invoice if there is any error or omission*.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were required to list three reference sources that a purchasing department may consult when acquiring goods and services. Most candidates failed to list the correct reference sources that the purchasing department may consult for goods and services. These include *catalogue*, *enquiry*, *e-commerce/internet*, *quotation* and *price list*.

For Part (c) (i), candidates were to use the purchase requisition form, given as an insert, to complete an order, using the current date. Most candidates who attempted this part did well as they inserted the correct information on the purchase requisition to complete the order, thus scoring full marks. Weaker candidates failed to place the information in the correct order on the form.

In Part (c) (ii), candidates were asked to explain two effects a late requisition could have on a company's operations. Most candidates were able to explain only one effect, giving correct responses such as:

- *Required material will not arrive on time, thus causing delays in production*
- *Pressure will be put on department to meet customers' needs for goods/services on a timely basis*
- *Cost of goods could be increased with late orders*
- *Delays in getting goods to customers*

Approximately 61 per cent of candidates attempted this question. The marks gained ranged from 0 to 13, and the mean was 7.07; standard deviation was 2.26.

Question 7

This question tested candidates' understanding of:

- The functions of the marketing office
- The purpose of the equipment used in the sales and marketing office
- How to calculate cash discount, total discount and total amount due for goods
- The ways a company can benefit from offering discounts

In Part (a) (i), candidates were required to list three functions of the marketing office. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving correct responses for the functions of the marketing office such as:

- *Promoting the firm's products*
- *Preparing a marketing budget/pricing*
- *Publishing promotional activities, fliers, price lists, catalogues*
- *Planning strategies to help the firm achieve its financial objectives through its products*

Part (a) (ii) required candidates to state the purpose of three pieces of equipment — computer, calculator and scanner — that are used in the sales and marketing office. This part of the question was done well done by most candidates who attempted it. Weaker candidates failed to give correct purposes of the scanner which include *to scan original documents from customers; to advertise material created to be transferred to a computer; and to make soft copies of documents to be transferred electronically.*

For Part (b) (i), candidates were given information to calculate the cash discount for the period, the total discounts offered, and the overall total amount due for the goods. They were to show all working. Most candidates who attempted this part scored full marks and showed how they calculated the correct discounts and amount due for the goods. Weaker candidates failed in their bid to calculate correctly.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were asked to consider why discounts are given despite the fact that companies are making a loss. They were to explain three ways a company can benefit from offering discounts.

This part of the question presented a challenge to some of the candidates who attempted it as they failed to come up with three ways a company can benefit from offering discounts. Some of the correct responses given were:

- *Encourages large purchases of goods*
- *Encourage prompt payments/customer loyalty*
- *Reduces quantity of old stocks*
- *Increases the company goodwill*
- *Attracts new customers*
- *Reduces the likelihood of customers owing money*

This question was attempted by approximately 51 per cent of the candidates. The marks gained ranged from 1 to 15, and the mean was 8.67, with a standard deviation of 3.53.

Question 8

This question tested candidates' understanding of:

- The functions of the factory office
- The duties of a clerk in the factory office
- The consequences persons may encounter should the bill of lading not accompany goods sent
- Guidelines to ensure that goods arrive in good condition to consignees

For Part (a) (i), candidates were to list three functions of the factory office.

For the most part, candidates gave correct responses such as:

- *Making sure the quality of products meets market standards*
- *Keeping stock control at optimum levels*
- *Making available materials, labour and machines to produce goods and services*
- *Liaising with other departments*
- *Maintaining sufficient stock to keep production of goods going*
- *Health and safety standards: employees and environment*

Weaker candidates confused the functions of the despatch and transport offices with that of the factory office.

Part (a) (ii) required candidates to state three duties of a clerk in the factory office. This part of the question was done satisfactorily by some candidates who gave correct responses such as:

- *Liaise with other departments*
- *Dispatch goods to customers on time*
- *Prepare and complete records/documents used in production*
- *Address customers' complaints*
- *Monitor progress of goods ordered by customer*
- *Maintain work schedule for factory workers*

Weaker candidates stated duties done by a clerk in the general/administrative office.

For Part (b) (i), candidates were given a scenario stating that in the Caribbean it is the culture for parents to migrate to foreign countries and later send back foodstuff and other goods to relatives by sea. They were also told that a bill of lading should accompany goods supplied. Candidates were to advise persons of three consequences that may be encountered should the bill of lading not accompany goods sent.

For those candidates who attempted this part of the question, many were able to generate correct responses such as:

- *The goods cannot be claimed from the wharf*
- *There is the possibility that the goods would not get on a vessel*
- *There would be no document to prove ownership of goods*

- *The goods could get lost in transit*
- *Packages would be viewed in a suspicious way*
- *Charges could not be legally assigned*

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were to outline three guidelines which would ensure that the goods arrive in good condition to the consignee.

This part of the question was done satisfactorily by most candidates who attempted it as they gave among their responses the following:

- *Ensure that the goods are packed securely*
- *Ship package with a reputable shipping line*
- *Describe every item in the package*
- *Pay for the shipment*
- *Ensure that the consignee's address is written on the package*

This was the least popular of the optional questions, as it was only attempted by approximately 16 per cent of the candidates.

Marks ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 5.76, with a standard deviation of 2.95.

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

A case was provided and candidates were required to read and respond to ten structured questions. This paper was worth 50 marks.

Candidates were required to apply analytical and evaluative skills to respond appropriately to questions asked. In addition to the case, candidates were given several short scenarios from which they were to respond appropriately using market research techniques.

The case, which was developed from Module VII, explored the roles and functions of the human resource office. It was entitled 'The Merger'. Two companies planned to merge their businesses in order to survive the recession being experienced in the Caribbean and worldwide. Their new office would be located in Jamaica under the consolidated name of Ramjeed & Davis Co. Ltd. A number of meetings took place where management, among other things, decided to consolidate all the departments beginning with the HR department. Some staff would be kept; others would be made redundant, while new staff

would be employed with appropriate skills. The new company pledged to offer increased benefits and improved HR procedures and functions aimed at increasing productivity.

Marks ranged from 0 to 48. The mean score was 27.55, with a standard deviation of 7.92.

Question 1

Candidates were asked to state four work tasks that the HR department would be required to perform before hiring new staff as a result of the merger.

Candidates performed fairly well on this question and stated correct responses such as:

- *Recruit and select qualified, skilled and experienced workers*
- *Budget for training and development of staff*
- *Re-deploy staff*
- *Prepare redundancy packages*
- *Ensure all employees have job descriptions/specifications/appraisals/operational manual*
- *Ensure that the welfare of staff is taken into consideration/hold meetings*

Question 2

Candidates were required to draft a new application form to be used for updating records in the HR department.

Most candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this question as they failed to include instructions on the form and to include essential information such as date of birth, address, marital status, education/qualification, interests, and/or references.

Question 3

This question asked candidates to explain four actions management should take to satisfy the conditions of employment at the workplace.

Many candidates were able to generate correct responses such as:

- *Compile new salary packages/benefits*
- *Keep regular meetings/communicate*
- *Provide the necessary physical and human resources to enhance productivity*
- *Provide an ergonomically friendly environment*

- *Create new job titles for the merger company*
- *Write new contracts as this is a new company and terms of employment may be different, for example, qualification and experience*

Question 4

Candidates were required to recommend four recruitment procedures that may be used to recruit the most competent persons for the new company.

Candidates gave correct responses such as:

- *Examine the skills/knowledge/attributes/experience of applicants*
- *Advertise/shortlist the applicants and interview them*
- *Determine the job positions needed*
- *Conduct rigorous job interviews*
- *Conduct thorough job search/utilize a recruitment agency*
- *Consider whether to employ new staff or keep internal staff*

Question 5

Candidates were required to draft a job description for an HR Clerk IV position. They were to include three of the most important duties and responsibilities for that position.

This question was done unsatisfactorily by most candidates as they failed to include the correct information indicative of a job description. These include salary scale, department, and the position to which an employee reports, as preliminary information which are usually placed on the document. Weaker candidates were not able to write a proper job summary nor list at least three duties and responsibilities of the HR Clerk IV.

Question 6

Candidates were asked to state one action that management could take to ensure the health and safety of its employee in each of the following situations:

- (i) Disposing of waste materials
- (ii) Providing clean and sufficient toilet facilities
- (iii) Providing access to clean water

Most candidates were able to score full marks for this question as they provided appropriate responses for each part of the question.

Question 7

For Part (a), candidates were to suggest to management, four ways they could discipline their employees, other than by firing them.

The responses to this question were good, and they included:

- Listen to employees' grievances
- Have meetings/workshops with employees to find solutions/recommendations to improve the situation
- If problems with employees continue, put it in writing as a warning
- If nothing changes, implement sanctions such as suspension, deduction from salary
- Write follow-up letter and place on files
- Demote the employee if indiscipline continues and suspension does not work

For Part (b), candidates were to use any of the suggestions made in Part (a) and give one reason why it is likely to succeed. Candidates performed fairly well on this part of the question, indicating correct responses in the categories of listening to employees; having meetings; and putting warning in writing. The correct actions and information were given by the candidates.

Question 8

Candidates were to indicate one way in which each of the following conditions may prevent staff turnover.

- (i) Offering competitive salaries
- (ii) Providing good working conditions
- (iii) Offering training for staff
- (iv) Providing competitive fringe benefits

The question was done well by most candidates who attempted it; weaker candidates misunderstood the word *competitive*, and suggested that this could cause jealousy among employees.

Question 9

For this question, candidates were given a scenario where Sam and Sue applied for a vacant position as chief accountant. However, Sue being younger and having a physical disability, was being discouraged by her colleagues who presented reasons that someone of her age, gender, physical ability and other attributes would not get the job.

Candidates were to advise Sue of three ways in which the Employment Act can protect her. Those candidates who attempted this question gave among their responses the following:

- *Offers equal opportunity for both male and female at the workplace*
- *Offers protection against harassment or victimization*
- *Protection from not being promoted*
- *Age and physical disability should not prevent anyone from due consideration of particular positions.*

Question 10

Candidates were asked to state four consequences for staff if annual performance appraisals are not completed and done on time.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question, as they scored marks for stating:

- *Comments/feedback made by supervisor could not be challenged*
- *Weaknesses/strengths of employees would not be identified*
- *Training to improve work deficiencies would not be implemented*
- *A good job would not be recognized*
- *Contracts would not be renewed*
- *No record/evidence for disciplinary measures*

Recommendations

- Candidates need to expose themselves to more Paper 032 type questions and seek to develop critical and analytical skills in order to answer the application questions which comprise this paper.
- Since most candidates who sit this examination are private candidates, upon registration for the examination, they should be informed that they need to be guided by the syllabus, recommended texts and support materials.

- Candidates should visit the CXC website and read comments presented in the subject reports in order to assist them in identifying their strengths and weaknesses.
- Candidates need to practise to fill out forms accurately, such as job descriptions, applications, among others, since this is one of the areas of poor performance.
- In responding to questions, candidates should also note key words, such as *describe, state, suggest, differentiate, prepare draft, advise*), to guide them in presenting information in a logical and organized manner.
- Private candidates should also consider seeking assistance from experienced teachers in the school system.

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

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

MAY/JUNE 2014

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The Office Administration (OA) examination is offered in January and May/June of each year. This year, some 17,197 candidates registered to sit the June examination. This number represents a decrease from last year where 17,992 candidates registered for the examination. Approximately 74 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I–III, compared to 77 per cent in 2013.

The Office Administration examination comprises four papers of which candidates are required to sit three:

Paper 01 - Multiple choice

Paper 02 - Short answer

Paper 031 - The School-Based Assessment (SBA).

Paper 032 - The Alternative to the SBA

Paper 032 is normally done by candidates who do not have the supervision needed to carry out the SBA. This year, 2014, marked the beginning of the assessment of the revised OA syllabus.

The details of each paper along with candidates' performance on the different papers and the specific strengths and weaknesses observed during the marking exercises are addressed in the report below.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 — Multiple choice

Paper 01 consisted of 60 multiple choice items covering the entire syllabus. The items were set to cover Knowledge of content areas and Application of the knowledge. The overall mean was 34.16 or 56.93 per cent compared with 32.93 or 54.89 per cent for May/June 2013. Marks ranged from 1 to 57.

Paper 02 — Short Answer

Paper 02 assessed Knowledge of the syllabus content and Application of this knowledge to the procedures and processes associated with specialized office activities and routines. The paper consisted of seven questions which were further arranged in two sections. Section I comprised three compulsory questions covering Sections I–VII of the new syllabus, while Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Sections VIII–XII. Candidates were required to answer **three** questions from Section II. In total, they were required to answer **six** questions from this paper. The mean on this Paper was 40.86 out of 90 or 45.40 per cent. Marks ranged from zero to 85. Each question on this paper was worth a maximum of 15 marks.

Section 1 - Compulsory Questions

Question 1

This question was designed to test the candidates'

- knowledge of the channels of oral communication
- knowledge of ways in which communication can flow in an organization
- knowledge of the kind of information that is obtained from reference sources such as thesaurus, maps and post office guide
- understanding of how to draft an advertisement for the newspaper.

The mean for this question was 9.28. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

For Part (a), candidates were required to name two channels of oral communication. It was worth 2 marks. Generally, candidates were able to give correct responses such as:

- *conversation, interview, meeting, teleconferencing, paging*

In Part (b), candidates were asked to list three ways in which communication can flow in an organization. It was worth 3 marks.

This part of the question was unsatisfactorily done as many candidates gave responses relating to written communication and meetings and hence, failed to give correct responses such as:

- *downward/top-down; upward/bottom up; horizontal/lateral; diagonal and grapevine communication.*

Part (c) required candidates to state the information that is obtained in reference sources: Thesaurus, maps and the post office guide. It was worth 3 marks.

Most candidates gave acceptable responses for 'maps' such as: *roads, streets and places in a country, locally and internationally*. However, some candidates misunderstood 'thesaurus' and gave incorrect responses relating to money and banking; some even changed the word to 'treasury'. Many candidates failed to give the correct information that is obtained in the post office guide, which is *information on postal services and regulations governing the sending of letters and parcels by post and postal rates*.

Part (d) required candidates to draft an advertisement in their answer booklet for the position of clerical assistant for insertion in the *Sunday Herald*, given specific information. It was worth 7 marks.

Most candidates were able to score 5–7 marks in this part of the question. In many instances, they were able to interpret the information given, and organize it using an appropriate format.

Question 2

This question tested candidates' knowledge and understanding of:

- statutory provisions designed for employee protection at the workplace
- factors used to determine the period for retaining records in the office
- duties of a records management clerk
- how to write a letter of resignation to be sent to an employer

The mean for this question was 7.40. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

Part (a) required candidates to list three statutory provisions which are designed for employee protection at the workplace. It was worth 3 marks.

Most candidates could only state two statutory provisions: occupational safety and health and the working environment, and welfare. Expected responses like termination of employment; equality of opportunity and treatment in employment and occupation, and termination of employment were not given in most instances.

In Part (b), candidates were required to state two factors that are used to determine the period for retaining records in the office. It was worth 2 marks.

Candidates performed fairly well on this part of the question, giving correct responses such as: *need for record in the future, legal stipulations for documents to be kept; available storage space and proof of transaction.*

Part (c) required candidates to list two duties of a records management clerk. It was worth 2 marks.

This part of the question was satisfactorily done as many candidates gave correct responses such as:

- *managing records; selecting the most appropriate filing system; using different filing systems; organizing records for filing and placing in folders; maintaining confidentiality/safeguarding files from unauthorized persons, and retrieving information/records.*

For Part (d), candidates were to write a letter of resignation to be sent to their employer, given a scenario. It was worth 8 marks.

Responses to this part of the question were appropriate in most instances. However, some candidates failed to insert the date using an appropriate format; include a subject in the letter; and use matching salutation and complimentary close

Question 3

This question tested candidates' understanding of:

- the meaning and function of a tickler reminder system
- the duties that a receptionist is required to perform on a daily basis
- the statement ex officio member
- how certain given points could contribute to a successful meeting
- how to calculate time differences between countries, using 12-hour and 24-hour format

The mean for this question was 7.90. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

For Part (a), candidates were required to state the meaning and function of a 'tickler reminder system'. It was worth 2 points.

Many candidates used the same word 'reminder' for the meaning of the term. In most cases, candidates scored at least one mark for the *meaning* of the term, but failed to give the *function* of the tickler reminder system, that is: each time a file is borrowed, a card is placed in the system under the date the file is due to be returned. It is easy to check the card and chase any overdue file.

Part (b) required candidates to list three duties that a receptionist is required to perform on a daily basis. It was worth 3 marks.

The majority of candidates scored satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving correct responses such as:

- *receiving and screening visitors; keeping the reception register, operating the switchboard, and maintaining the reception area.*

Part (c) required candidates to explain the meaning of an 'ex officio' member. It was worth 2 marks. This part of the question was unsatisfactorily done by many candidates as they failed to indicate that *this is a person who is automatically a member of a board or committee by virtue of the office he holds.*

In Part (d) (i), candidates were given a scenario and the following points:

- Being on time
- Having an agenda
- Maintaining focus
- Being prepared
- Greeting/ welcoming staff

They were to state how each point could contribute to a successful meeting. It was worth 5 points.

Many candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this part of the question as they failed to connect their responses to the scenario, that is, how each point given contributes to a successful meeting. For example, 'being on time' would allow for a quorum, thus allowing meeting to start on time; and 'having an agenda' would allow the meeting to run smoothly and give the order of business to proceed.

Part (d) (ii) required candidates to calculate time differences between specified countries, using the 24-hour format, based on a given scenario. It was worth 3 marks.

This part of the question was satisfactorily done as candidates scored at least two marks from a maximum of 3 marks. Many candidates either failed to convert correctly from the 12-hour clock to the 24-hour format, or to write the time on the 24-hour clock, using an acceptable format, for example, 5:30 p.m. should be represented as 1730 hours, and not 17:30 p.m.

Section II – Optional Questions

Candidates were required to attempt any **three** of **four** questions from this section.

Question 4

This question tested candidates' understanding of:

- specialized functions which are performed by the human resource clerk
- types of employee information that must be kept confidential by the human resource clerk
- the importance of certain concepts to the success of a business entity
- completing performance appraisals for employees
- ways in which an appraisal serves as an effective tool in managing unsatisfactory performance of employees

The mean for this question was 6.81. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to list two specialized functions other than maintaining confidentiality, which are performed by the human resource clerk. It was worth 2 marks.

This part of the question was done fairly well, with candidates giving correct responses such as: *attending to staff welfare; preparing for interviews; preparing various forms of business communication, and assisting with the functions of the HR management office*. There were, however, many candidates who gave the functions of the HRM office such as recruitment, firing, and deployment.

Part (a) (ii) required candidates to give two types of employee information that must be kept confidential by the human resource clerk. It was worth 2 marks.

In most instances, candidates scored one mark, giving either personal/private information such as salary, or information on medical history. Rarely, did they give expected responses such as 'employee disciplinary records, benefits received and appraisals.

Part (b) required the candidates to explain the importance of any two of the terms below to the success of a business entity. It was worth 2 marks.

- collection of accounts
- credit control
- audit

This part of the question was fairly well done. The weaker candidates, however, could for the most part, explain only one of the terms satisfactorily as they relate it to their personal lives and not to the success of a business entity. Expected responses for each term included:

- *Collection of accounts: payments collected and recorded; management informed of delinquent debtors; use of debt chasers to collect amounts due*
- *Credit control: system of selling only up to a certain value of goods on credit to a customer; to avoid tying up too much capital in credit*
- *Audit: investigated financial records to determine if they are accurate and complete; to ensure assets are protected; to report any discrepancy in books/records.*

Part (c) (i) required the candidates to examine a given appraisal for an employee and to complete the labeled sections with likely responses. It was worth 6 marks.

This part of the question was done satisfactorily by those candidates who interpreted the appraisal rating correctly. Some candidates were challenged in writing appropriate responses in the 'comment', 'overall performance rating' sections, and in using the correct dates for both the supervisor and the employee.

Part (c) (ii) required the candidates to state three ways in which an appraisal serves as an effective tool in managing the performance of an employee whose appraisal results are unsatisfactory. It was worth 3 marks.

The majority of candidates were able to score at least one mark in this part of the question as they gave correct responses such as:

- *it determines one's strengths and weaknesses/needs of employee; actions to be taken, e.g. transferring, deploying or mentorship, and training skills/knowledge and qualities required to maximize potential.*

This question was the *second* of the *most popular* optional questions

Question 5

This question was designed to test the candidates' knowledge and understanding of:

- the functions of the procurement and inventory management office
- the difference between a standing order and a letter of credit
- how to prepare a currency memorandum for employees
- how to prepare a cash summary for the bank in the amount to be paid to employees

The mean for this question was 4.45. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

For Part (a), candidates were required to state two functions of the procurement and inventory management office. It was worth 2 marks.

For the most part, candidates were able to score one mark, giving invariably, the correct responses of 'liaising with other departments', and 'determining items to purchase'.

For Part (b), candidates were required to explain the difference between a 'standing order' and a 'letter of credit'. It was worth 4 marks.

This part of the question was done unsatisfactorily as in many instances, candidates failed to differentiate between the two types of payment.

The standing order is an order given by an account holder to his bank to transfer a certain sum of money to another account at regular intervals, while the letter of credit is addressed to a bank in a foreign country to honour bills of exchange or permit the user to withdraw funds when, and if necessary.

For Part (c) (i), candidates were required to prepare a currency memorandum for employees by giving the highest currency at all times possible. They should ensure that each employee gets at least one \$500.00 note. It was worth 6 marks.

Most candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this part of the question as they failed to give the highest currency at all times, and to give each employee at least one \$500.00 note as instructed.

The expected response for this question is shown below.

CURRENCY MEMORANDUM

	NOTES							COINS				TOTAL
NAME	\$1000	\$500	\$100	\$50	\$20	\$10	\$5	.50	.25	.10	.05	\$
Sasha Thomas	1	2				1			1			2010.25
Rajesh Maraj	1	2	4					1	1			2400.75
Karla Burns	2	2					1			1	1	3005.15
Paul Deans	-	2	4	1	2				1		1	1490.30
TOTAL												8906.45

For Part (c) (ii), candidates were required to prepare a cash summary for the National Commercial Bank in the amount to be paid to the employees. It was worth 3 marks.

This part of the question was also done unsatisfactorily by many candidates who failed to indicate the correct number of notes/coins and the correct amounts at right column of the cash summary. The expected response for this question is shown below.

CASH SUMMARY

No. of Notes		Notes/Coins		Total (\$)
4	×	1000	=	4000
8	×	500	=	4000
8	×	100	=	800
1	×	50	=	50
2	×	20	=	40
1	×	10	=	10
1	×	5	=	5
1	×	.50	=	.50
3	×	.25	=	.75
1	×	.10	=	.10
2	×	.05	=	.10
TOTAL AMOUNT				<u>8906.45</u>

This was the *least popular* of the optional questions.

Question 6

This question was designed to test the candidates' understanding of:

- the factors that can influence the procedures for purchasing goods and acquiring services in the Procurement and Inventory Management Office
- the duties of the clerks in the Sales and Marketing offices
- calculating and completing stock card for a company
- ways in which the electronic method of stock control can benefit an organization

The mean for this question was 6.50. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

For Part (a), candidates were required to state two factors that can influence the procedure for purchasing goods and acquiring services in the Procurement and Inventory Management Office. It was worth 2 marks.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving desired responses such as *the level of urgency; the cost of goods and service rendered; terms and conditions offered and the quality of goods and speed of delivery*.

Part (b) required candidates to identify two duties of the clerk in the Sales and Marketing offices. It was worth 4 marks.

Most candidates were able to score at least one mark for each office. *Correct responses for the Sales Office include: maintenance of sales records, calculation of commissions and discounts, and preparing relevant records; the correct responses given for the Marketing Office include: maintaining mailing lists, preparing simple and routine press release, and assisting with promotional, trade fairs/exhibitions and advertising material.*

For Part (c) (i), candidates were required to use the form given as an insert to calculate and complete the stock card for a company. It was worth 7 marks.

This part of the question presented a challenge to many candidates as they failed to calculate and complete the form to give the correct running balance at the end of the month.

Part (c) (ii), required candidates to outline two ways in which the electronic method of stock control can benefit a company who decided to change from a manual recording system of stock control, and whose staff members are resisting the change. It was worth 2 marks.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving correct responses such as:

- *quicker mode for keying in information; easy retrieval/transfer of information; save storage space; quicker means of calculating/organizing information, and easier mode of identification as all stock items are labeled with a unique bar code.*

Question 7

This question was designed to test the candidates' understanding of:

- the functions of the Operations and Despatch Offices
- the purpose of the Destination sheet and the Advice note
- how to use the form provided to calculate and write the required information on an invoice

The mean for this question was 5.77. Scores ranged from zero to 15. This question was the *most popular* in the section.

For Part (a), candidates were required to state two functions each of the Operations and Despatch Offices. It was worth 4 marks.

Most candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this part of the question as responses given relate mainly to the HR office and mail/postal services. The more able candidates gave correct responses for the functions of the Operations Office such as:

- *coordinating activities related to production; maintenance of operations records, quality assurance, and costing of finished goods*
- *Correct responses for the functions of the Despatch Office include: maintain documents for despatch of goods; maintain database of couriers, contracts and agents, adhere to statutory requirements, coordination of delivery of goods, and work in collaboration with the sales office*

Part (b) required candidates to state the purpose of the Destination sheet and the Advice note. It was worth 2 marks.

Most candidates demonstrated understanding of the Destination sheet by giving correct responses such as:

- Gives direction/distance to place of delivery of goods; gives the name/address of the customer to whom the delivery is to be made; describes the contents of delivery, states driver's name and vehicle number, and serves as proof of receipt of goods.

The Advice note posed a challenge to many candidates as they failed to give correct responses such as:

- Identification of carrier/method; used as an invoice before goods are shipped to the customer to inform payment agreement, terms and conditions of delivery, and the time goods are expected to arrive; used to inform customers that goods are on their way.

For Part (c), candidates were required to use the form provided to calculate and write the required information on an invoice. It was worth 9 marks.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, invariably filling in the form correctly. The weaker candidates failed to calculate the VAT and write the correct totals in each column and the grand total.

Recommendations

The examining committee would like to recommend the following approaches to teachers.

- Place greater emphasis on the correct format for letters and other documents.
- Vary teaching methodology to include the integrated approach to learning Office Administration. Cross-disciplinary collaboration and teaching involving teachers of English Language, Principles of Accounts, Electronic Document Preparation and Management and Office Administration could lead to greater articulation and reinforcement of concepts, procedures and processes.
- Emphasize the use of basic documents/forms such as: invoice, order, currency memorandum/cash summary, appraisal, advertisement and letters
- Pay keen attention to the new syllabus and to revised textbook content written by a variety of authors.
- Invite guest speakers and plan field trips to reinforce understanding of key areas, functions of workers in the different departments and documents and equipment used to enhance efficiency.

The committee wishes to recommend the following to candidates.

- Visit the CXC websites and read reports posted, join small study groups and network with teachers and peers.
- Make study schedules or timetables and stick to them consistently and conscientiously, to help in preparing for the examination.

Paper 032 – Alternative to the SBA

This paper targeted private individuals who would not have the opportunity to complete SBA projects as school candidates. It took the form of a written examination designed to test the candidates' ability to use their personal experiences of routine office activities acquired through observation or from performing the actual office tasks as real employees.

The paper consisted of eight short, structured essay-type questions, based on an office case entitled, 'The Economic Plunge'. Questions 5 and 8 contained sub-sections – Parts (a) and (b). For this examination, the case focused on Section I of the syllabus which covers Office Orientation.

It was noted in this paper that some areas continued to challenge candidates and affected their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 23.78 or 48 per cent, compared with 22.38 or 45 per cent in 2013. Marks ranged from 0 to 44 out of a maximum of 50.

The case entitled: *The economic Plunge*, summarized the following main points:

Marci and Marci Company Ltd operated a large clothing company from Georgetown in Guyana for fifteen years. The company experienced a significant drop in sales with profit returns of 45-60 per cent for the last two years.

After a review of its financial report, the board members voted on three major changes which include downsizing the company, diversifying its product by retailing cell phones and computer accessories, and change from the traditional to a modern office system.

Following the board's decision, the company's mission, vision and objectives had to be changed to reflect its new perspective.

Question 1

Based on given information, candidates were required to list three important points that should be considered in revising the company's Mission Statement to reflect its new perspective.

Candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this question as they were not able to delineate points such as: *core values; shared aspirations; strategy for accomplishing company's goals/objectives/activities; company's main purpose/focus/aims, and target group*

Marks ranged from 0 to 3 and the mean was 0.79 or 26 per cent.

Question 2

Candidates were to suggest three actions that the company should take to effectively downsize to a small business.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question, giving correct responses such as:

- *Decide on number of staff members required for the new company*
- *Make some workers redundant*
- *Re-train staff for new operations*
- *Deploy staff to relevant departments*
- *Purchase new/modern office equipment/stock*
- *Consider possibility of relocation*
- *Consider impact of changes on the budget*

Marks ranged from 0 to 3 and the mean was 1.78 or 59 per cent

Question 3

This question required candidates to offer suggestions to persons who are still uncertain about the decision of downsizing from a large to a small company, of three advantages a small business may have compared to a large business.

Performance on this question was satisfactory and includes correct responses such as: better interpersonal relationships with management and staff; employees perform several tasks and become multi-skilled in office activities; less bureaucracy in decision-making; simple organization structure, and clearer lines of communication

The weaker candidates compared large and small business generally instead of applying the question to the case and responding in relation to the downsizing of the business.

Marks ranged from 0 to 3 and the mean was 1.51 or 50 per cent.

Question 4

Candidates were required to write a memo to the office manager recommending three pieces of modern equipment they would like ordered for the newly designed office and suggest how they may be used in this office to enhance sales.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question. They headed up the memo correctly, gave an appropriate introduction and relevant equipment and purposes. Equipment included the: *Risograph – high speed digital printing system for high volume photocopying and printing*
Computer – input/output information; process raw data into information
Printer/photocopier - print/provide hard copy of promotional material
Scanner – capture images of data for conversion into electronic files
Facsimile (fax) – transmits and receives exact copies of document
Digital cameras – capture digital images for presentation or printing

Marks ranged from 0 to 6 and the mean was 3.85 or 64 per cent.

Question 5 (a)

Candidates were required to give four reasons why the modern office system would be better for the company to adapt in order to maintain efficiency in its new line of operation.

Most candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this question. Those candidates who attempted it gave correct responses such as:

- *Designed to accommodate modern equipment/furniture/work stations*
- *More flexibility in structure and arrangement/relocation of furniture/work stations*
- *Less costly to construct/better acoustic*
- *Facilitates interpersonal interaction with colleagues/team work encourages*
- *Overheads are less expensive*
- *Swift actions and decisions taken by different levels of workers*

Question 5 (b)

The company is considering changing its structure from a traditional to a modern office and based on the principles of ergonomics, candidates were to suggest four factors that the company should consider when designing its new office.

Many candidates received full marks for this question and gave correct responses such as:

- *Office and workstations layout; personal space, plants, temperature and lighting and design and layout of equipment*

Marks ranged from 0 to 8 and the mean was 3.61 or 45 per cent.

Question 6

Now that the company is considering diversifying its product line to meet customer demand, candidates were to suggest three activities that the company could centralize in order to be more efficient in its operations

For the most part, candidates' performance on this question was poorly done. Those candidates that attempted it failed to give correct responses such as:

- *Data inputting, photocopying, reproduction of documents/reprographics, word processing, legal services, and filing/records management.*

Marks ranged from 0 to 2 and the mean was 0.29 or 10 per cent.

Question 7

For this question, candidates were required to draft a job description, outlining four duties of a Level 1 Junior Office Clerk

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question. The main areas of weakness were in supplying the relevant information for the headings at: Department, Responsible to and Job summary. Correct duties and responsibilities given include:

- *General clerical functions*
- *Answer the telephone*
- *Type correspondence*
- *Answer enquiries*
- *Deal with customers*
- *Use office applications*

Marks ranged from 0 to 8 and the mean was 4.13 or 52 per cent.

Question 8 (a)

This part of the question tested candidates' ability to draft an advertisement for the notice board to include two attributes and two skills that office workers should possess.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving correct responses such as: Attributes – *punctuality, integrity, honesty, confidentiality, good deportment and grooming, high self-esteem and positive work ethics.*

Skills – *Literacy and numeracy, effective communication, time management, analytical and problem-solving, computer literacy; proficiency in the use of productivity tools and intra/interpersonal relation*

Question 8 (b)

Part (b) required candidates to suggest ways in which a good relationship among staff such as supervisor, colleagues and external customers, can improve productivity at the company

This part of the question was well done by most candidates as they were able to give the correct response for:

Supervisor: *sets objectives and ensures that they are met on a timely basis; respects and motivates staff to enhance morale/performance, and makes use of open communication/participation*

Colleagues: *Exercise good manners/respect/team spirit/tact for improvement and optimal effort; move capable employees to assist the less capable to achieve their objectives, thus achieving corporate goals*

External customers: *offer good customer service to make clients feel satisfied/confident and want to come back; exercise care/courtesy/respect/consideration to build loyalty to organization*

Marks ranged from 0 to 14 and the mean was 8.32 or 59 per cent.

Recommendations

Candidates need to:

- Visit the CXC website and read comments presented in the subject reports to assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- Practise writing mission statements, memoranda, and job descriptions
- Note key words in the examination questions which provide guidance in presenting information in a logical and organized manner. These words are normally highlighted.

Paper 031 — School Based Assessment (SBA)

The school-based assessment component of the Office Administration course is designed to assist candidates in acquiring specific competencies for application in real-life situations. The research project is intended to develop in candidates the basic skills of research and requires them to collect data in a scientific manner.

The information gathered is compiled in a report and is assessed on three criteria: Preparation, Gathering Data, and Presentation with a weighting of 13, 15 and 22 marks, respectively. This paper was worth 50 marks. The mean was 30.95 or 62 per cent.

Criterion 1: Preparation

- Most candidates generated fairly good topics for their projects, but some topics were too wide and not clearly stated. In many instances, the title page lacked requisite elements such as the territory and candidate number.
- Candidates provided an appropriate table of contents (TOC), but there were instances where they did not number the pages correctly in the project as indicated in the TOC.
- Some candidates failed to identify a specific department in the firm for their project, while others failed to provide aims that were consistent with the topic under investigation. There were times when aims were confused with functions, and vice versa.
- Most candidates included correspondence requesting permission to conduct the project. Nonetheless, they failed to provide an appropriate salutation which is aligned to an acceptable complimentary close. General layout and signatory were not presented in an appropriate manner.

Criterion 2: Gathering Data

- Most candidates provided a suitable specimen of a data-gathering instrument. Notwithstanding this, the explanations of the usage of the instrument were limited and justifications were not forthcoming.
- In many instances, candidates presented the five research questions but they were inconsistent with the aims, functions and topics under investigation.
- On many occasions, candidates failed to identify legislation governing the workplace. However, most were able to provide a health and safety practice they observed and a staff rule they had to comply with in carrying out the project.

Criterion 3: Presentation

- Most candidates produced a report consisting of findings, challenges and problem-solving strategies. Rarely did candidates' reports include the relevant charts, tables and graphs.
- Most candidates provided a business document but it was sometimes inconsistent with the topic/department under investigation.
- In some cases the four-column table which included the equipment used in the firm, provided general uses of the equipment identified instead of specific uses of the equipment by the

department studied.

- Generally, candidates did not follow the guidelines for preparing the bibliography.
- Most candidates scored satisfactory marks on the overall presentation of the project.

Major Strengths: Neat and well arranged, word-processed projects.

Weaknesses:

- Failure to attach to the project, a current mark scheme indicating how the projects were marked
- Failure to state how candidates became aware of the legislation regulating the workplace
- Failure to state the *department* of the organization under study
- Incorrect sources of information
 - Reference for persons interviewed: date, place and job title were not included
 - Incorrect use of publication styles, namely APA or MLA or other approved styles
 - Reference for Internet sites: address on the website, name of authors and organizations were not correct.

Recommendations to Teachers

- Encourage students to pay keen attention to detail in order to earn scores close to, or at the maximum marks allocated.
- Monitor students consistently throughout the project to ensure that the project is done correctly, it represents the candidates' own work, and that the stipulated guidelines in the current syllabus are being pursued.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

JANUARY 2015

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The Office Administration examination is offered in January and May/June each year. In January 2015, some 684 candidates sat the examination compared with 825 in the 2014 sitting. Approximately 54 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I–III compared with 76.24 per cent in 2014. The areas of weakness will be addressed in the detailed comments on individual questions on the different question papers.

Three papers were offered at the General Proficiency level to ensure broad coverage of the syllabus and accessibility to a wider range of the candidate population. The objectives tested were chosen from all 12 sections of the new Office Administration syllabus which came into effect in June 2014. The papers offered are as follows:

- Paper 01 – Multiple Choice
- Paper 02 – Short Answer
- Paper 032 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment (SBA)

This was the first time that the subject was marked on-line.

Paper 01 consisted of 60 multiple-choice items covering the entire syllabus. The items covered knowledge of the content area and application of knowledge. The overall mean was 32.30 compared with 35.31 for January 2014. Marks ranged from 12 to 54 out of a maximum available score of 60. The performance this year was consistent with that of 2014.

Paper 02 consisted of two sections. Section I comprised three compulsory questions drawn from Modules I to VII. These questions were attempted by the majority of candidates.

Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Modules VIII to XII. Candidates were required to answer three questions from Section II so, in total, six questions from Paper 02. This paper assessed knowledge and application of procedures and processes associated with routine office activities and specialized departments in the modern organization.

The overall mean for this paper was 42.43 compared with 42.62 in 2014. Marks ranged from 3 to 74 out of a maximum of 90. There are, however, some areas that continue to pose difficulty to candidates and these are addressed in the section for detailed comments.

Paper 032 targeted mainly private candidates who would not have the opportunity to complete SBA projects as students at a school. It took the form of a written examination designed to test candidates' ability to use their personal experiences on routine office activities acquired through observation or from performing the actual office tasks as real employees.

The paper consisted of eight short, structured essay-type questions, based on an office case, with four of the questions containing subsections — Parts (a) and (b). For this examination, the case focused mainly on Module IV of the syllabus which covers Records and Information Management.

It was evident from the performance on this paper that many areas continue to challenge candidates and ultimately affect their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 16.26 compared with 27.55 in 2014. Marks ranged from 1 to 41 out of a maximum of 50.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Section I, which comprised three questions, was compulsory and each question was worth 15 marks. (Profile 1 for Question 1 was worth eight marks while Profile 2 was worth seven marks. On the other hand, Profile 1 for Questions 2 and 3 was worth seven marks each, while Profile 2 for these questions was worth eight marks each.)

In Section II which comprised optional questions (Profile 1 = 6 marks; Profile 2 = 9 marks), candidates were required to attempt any three of four questions.

Question 1

For Part (a), which was worth two marks, candidates were asked to state two items of information that job applicants can obtain from the mission statement of an organization. Generally, candidates were able to state the items to be obtained from the mission statement such as *the main purpose or goal of the organization, the activities that the business does; who the business strives to serve and justification for its existence.*

In Part (b), which was worth two marks, candidates were asked to give two reasons why excellent customer service is important to every business. In responding to this part of the question, many candidates gave correct responses such as *it promotes professionalism/image/reputation of the business; satisfies customers' needs/wants; creates good customer relationship/loyalty and promotes success or profitability.*

Part (c) was worth four marks and required candidates to explain two reasons it would not be wise to use a photocopying machine at school to reproduce more than 500 programmes for graduation. In their responses, many candidates alluded to reasons such as *it is not suitable for large volume copying and can be very time-consuming; also, it may be more economical to outsource firms for the job; other equipment such as a risograph may be used, and it could result in the rapid deterioration of the machine.*

In Parts (d) (i) and (ii), candidates were asked to describe two functions each performed by the human resource and records management clerks that require the use of literacy skills. This was worth four marks. For the human resource clerk, many candidates gave correct responses such as *to keep accurate database of HR records, store records in a systematic format, short-list applicants and attend to staff welfare appropriately;* while for the records management clerk, correct responses were given such as *to maintain the storage and retrieval systems for records, to organize records for filing using the various classifications; to manage the retention and disposal of records and to prepare out cards and absent folder indicators for files out on loan.*

Part (e), which was worth three marks, required candidates to identify problems a small beauty parlour operator may experience with consideration to size, layout and furniture as they relate to the comfort, health and safety of staff.

Most candidates were able to identify the problems. For the problem of size, most candidates gave *lack of space and work stations to work comfortably and safely, also poor ventilation and increased likelihood of injuries and accidents;* for layout, many candidates correctly *stated lack of space for proper arrangement of furniture so as not to block door/exits, cluttered aisles and walkways and inadequate lighting/ventilation or inadequate room for rearrangement and change;* and for furniture, many candidates responded correctly by stating that there would be *limited access to furniture that is used regularly, inadequate furniture to meet the needs of staff/clientele, inflexibility in arranging furniture and ergonomic factors being ignored.*

Marks for this question ranged from 1 to 15 and the mean was 9.24 (61.26 per cent).

Question 2

Part (a) required candidates to list three items of information that should be included in the portfolio of a bank teller who is selected for promotion at another branch and is being interviewed. Most candidates were able to list at least two items of information which include *certification or proof of additional qualifications, character reference, valid identification, letter of recommendation and evidence of performance appraisal*. Part (a) was worth three marks.

In Part (b), candidates were required to state two ways in which the receptionist can assist in maintaining a good interpersonal relationship between the organization and members of the public. This was worth two marks. This part of the question was generally well done as candidates gave correct responses such as *greet callers politely by name, answer telephone promptly, make visitors feel welcome, receive and file business cards and deal with appointments promptly*.

For Part (c), which was worth two marks, candidates were required to identify two attributes that a receptionist should possess to carry out the job effectively. Most candidates were able to identify at least one attribute and gave responses that include *good grooming, being smart/discreet and polite, use of initiative and being pleasant, organized, punctual, helpful and well spoken*.

Part (d), which was worth eight marks, required candidates to draft a letter of acknowledgement for the signature of the HR manager. Whereas, many candidates were able to draft the letter satisfactorily, most of them did not indicate that the letter was a draft requiring the signature of someone else other than the writer. Some candidates failed to:

- Address Mr Ram Webb as 'Mr Webb' instead they used his first name, 'Mr Ram'
- Include the current date in the letter
- Acknowledge Mr Webb's application and interest in employment at the company, even though they were instructed to do so
- Place the firm's address and applicant's address in their correct positions
- State an action to be taken by the company
- Include an appropriate closing paragraph

Marks for this question ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 6.30 (42 per cent).

Question 3

For Part (a), which was worth two marks, candidates were required to provide the meaning of any two terms as they relate to business meetings. For the most part, the

majority of candidates provided correct responses for the term *cancel* which is *to call off a meeting, to revoke, make void or announce that a planned event will not take place*; many candidates gave the meaning of *proposal* as *a matter/ idea to be considered made by an individual attending the meeting*; while some candidates correctly defined *motion* as *a formal step to propose an idea for decision by a group, or a resolution that is proposed at a meeting*.

Part (b) was worth two marks and required candidates to state two functions of a treasurer of an organization. This part of the question was done satisfactorily as many candidates stated correct responses such as *someone who takes responsibility/custody of all funds belonging to the organization, prepares/maintains financial records showing breakdown of receipts, payments and cash balances and approves the payment of bills and liaises with members about financial matters*.

For Part (c), candidates were asked to study the items in one column and rearrange any three of them in the order they would appear on a meeting agenda, and then write their responses in another column. This was worth three marks. For the most part, candidates re-arranged the agenda items correctly, stating them sequentially as follows: *apologies for absence, matters arising, chairman's report and other business*.

In Part (d), which was worth two marks, candidates were required to explain how the circulation of an action sheet could assist the chairman in ensuring a successful meeting. Generally, candidates were unable to explain clearly how the circulation of an action sheet could assist the chairman in ensuring a successful meeting. Some candidates made good attempts by stating that *persons are reminded of the deadline to complete tasks assigned, it helps to achieve meeting objectives and ensures follow up after the meeting*.

For Part (e), which was worth two marks, candidates were to explain how business persons' knowledge of time zones can assist them in conducting meetings internationally. Many candidates responded favourably to this part of the question by giving correct responses such as *meetings/conferences or discussions can be held during normal working hours in each country in a timely manner; travel times can be accurately calculated to ensure punctuality and full coverage of meeting; and knowledge of countries that are either ahead or behind universal time to determine working hours of business*.

In Part (f), which was worth four marks, candidates were required to interpret a bus schedule. Except for the first part of the question, most candidates failed to correctly interpret the rest of the bus schedule as indicated by the labelled brackets. There were few candidates who correctly interpreted the four labels of the bus schedule by stating that:

- The Mercedes bus company plies Route 2 on weekend mornings, Saturday to Sunday, starting at 8:00 a.m.
- The bus station is at Santa Cruz, from which the bus can be taken at one-hour intervals, starting at 8:00 a.m. up to 11:00 a.m.
- The street stops are at Beadle's Boulevard, Leeds Street, Park Mountain Drive and Longwood Road
- The bus will be at the various stops/places from 11:10 to 11:40 a.m. each weekend morning; the bus will take 30 minutes from Beadle's Boulevard to Longwood Road.

This question ended the compulsory section. Marks ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 6.21 (41.67 per cent).

Question 4

For Part (a), which was worth two marks, candidates were asked to identify two reasons for which employees may face disciplinary procedures. This part of the question was satisfactorily done as most candidates were able to identify correct reasons for which employees may face disciplinary procedures such as *frequent or habitual lateness, absenteeism, inability to do the work required, drug abuse, unacceptable behaviour, theft, harassment of co-workers and wilful destruction of the company's property*.

Part (b) was worth two marks and required candidates to state what *equality* means as one of the statutory provisions for employee protection at the workplace. Many candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving correct responses such as: *legal rights should be observed despite ethnicity, gender, religion, national origin, colour, place of abode, sexual preferences and disability*; also there should be fair wages and equal pay and benefits for similar jobs being done.

For Part (c), which was worth two marks, candidates were to identify a compulsory deduction and a voluntary deduction that are taken from an employee's gross pay. Generally, candidates responded satisfactorily to this part of the question, giving correct responses for compulsory deductions such as *Income tax/PAYE, National Insurance/Social Security, Education Tax and National Housing Trust*; while for voluntary deductions, they gave responses such as *health/life insurance/pension, union dues, credit union, mortgage, standing order, and bank loans*.

For Part (d), which was worth nine marks, candidates were to use information given to complete a crossed cheque. This part of the question was satisfactorily done except that some candidates failed to use parallel lines for crossing the cheque and inserted words instead. Many candidates inserted information in the correct places for drawer, drawee

and payee; also, they wrote the amount on the cheque in words and figures correctly in their respective positions and completed the cheque with number and date accurately.

Question 4 was the most popular optional question. Marks ranged from 1 to 15 and the mean was 8 (53.33 per cent).

Question 5

For Part (a), candidates were to identify two attributes that a clerk in the purchasing department should possess. This was worth two marks. This part of the question was generally well done with candidates giving correct responses such as *honesty/integrity, initiative, detail-oriented, confidentiality, reliability and willingness*.

In Part (b), which was worth two marks, candidates were to state two reasons it is important to manage stock of all items used in a business. This part of the question was fairly well done. Candidates who scored satisfactorily on this part of the questions gave correct responses such as:

- *Prevention of pilferage/theft*
- *Prevent spoils/obsolescence*
- *Signalling of market trends*
- *Avoid tying up of capital*
- *To have on hand, stocks for customers/employees*
- *Avoid overcrowding/cluttering of warehouse*
- *To know when reorder point is reached*
- *To organize stockroom/know the value of stock*

Part (c) which was worth two marks required candidates to explain what a bank statement with an opening debit balance of \$500 means in the customer's account. Candidates who attempted this part of the question explained that the opening debit balance of \$500 represented an overdraft as of the beginning of the month; hence the customer owes the bank that amount.

For Part (d), which was worth nine marks, candidates were to record information to show the correct balance on 20 December 2014 on a stationery stock card provided. This part of the question was done well by many candidates who attempted it as they showed evidence of competence in using a stationery stock card by recording accurately maximum/minimum and reorder levels with correct dates and quantities for receipts and issues; they included correct invoice and requisition numbers and departments and the correct balance of 20 boxes on 20 December, 2014.

Marks ranged from 1 to 15 and the mean was 8.51 (56.73 per cent).

Question 6

For Part (a) (i), which was worth three marks, candidates were required to list three duties of a marketing clerk. For the most part, candidates could list correctly at least one duty of a marketing clerk, which include *assists with preparing advertising material and sales promotion; liaises with media and advertising agencies, assists with preparing press releases and makes travel arrangements for marketing purposes.*

For Part (a) (ii), candidates were to identify three skills required of a sales clerk. This was worth three marks. This part of the question was done satisfactorily as most candidates identified appropriate skills such as *a computer skill to include spreadsheet, word processing and database, literacy and numeracy, interpersonal, operating multimedia projector/fax machine, and using reference tools.*

For Part (b), candidates were to outline five conditions that a company would have to maintain before it seeks to qualify as a member of the ISO. This was worth five marks. This part of the question was done well by few candidates who attempted it. Many candidates failed to give responses such as: *cost of production controlled, frequent internal audits, production process open for continued improvement, fair business practices conducted, trusted brand/reputation, high quality management systems and legal requirements for trading observed/registered.*

In Part (c), candidates were given a scenario where a company failed to pay attention to the important details of coordinating its production activities and so did not make a profit. They were to assume that they comprised the staff in the operations department and were asked to recommend four actions the company could take/enforce to create an environment of profitability. This was worth four marks. Most candidates were unable to recommend appropriate actions the company could take to create an environment of profitability. Few candidates gave correct responses such as *plan the expected production levels, act immediately on orders placed for goods, ascertain the amount of raw materials for production, employ the number of persons required to complete job, ensure equipment needed for the production process is serviced and ready for production, provide safe working conditions for production workers and plan realistic delivery schedules for goods or meet all delivery deadlines set.*

Marks ranged from 0 to 11 and the mean was 4.25 (28.33 per cent).

Question 7

In Part (a) (i), which was worth three marks, candidates were required to list three functions of the transport office.

Most candidates were able to correctly list at least one function of the transport office, giving varying responses such as:

- *Liaises with customers*
- *Maintains transportation records/destination sheets*
- *Keeps vehicle service records*
- *Determines most suitable method/cost effective way of transporting goods*
- *Transports goods from the office to customers*
- *Organizes maintenance of vehicles*

Part (a) (ii) required candidates to list three duties of the clerk in the operations office. This was worth three marks. This part of the question was done unsatisfactorily as most candidates could only correctly list one duty of the clerk in the operations office, giving varying responses such as:

- Prepares daily production reports
- Prepares rosters for workers on shift
- Keeps a list of all production workers and their skills
- Maintains accurate job cards
- Prepares accurate cost cards from planning master
- Coordinates activities pertaining to production
- Schedules regular servicing of production equipment

For Part (b), candidates were asked to explain how any three factors inclusive of cost, incentives, urgency and availability, could contribute to effective purchasing procedures at a company. This was worth six marks. This part of the question presented a challenge to some of the candidates who attempted it as they failed to come up with clear explanations of each factor which contributes to effective purchasing procedures. The more able candidates gave correct responses to *cost* as *how much the company is willing to pay for the goods in order to make a profit, customers' affordability for goods needed, consideration for discounts and reduction in cost for bulk buying*.

In explaining *incentives*, some candidates said that these are used to motivate and influence potential buyers, such as *trade and cash discounts, consideration of favourable payment terms and competitive quotations for goods*.

For *urgency* on the other hand, some candidates gave correct responses such as *the urgent need for which the goods are required, whether the purchase is made from local or international sources and the time for the use of goods.*

In explaining *availability*, some candidates gave correct responses such as *the variety of products available on the market that suit the needs of the company, to compare products and select the best that is available and whether or not goods are available locally or from overseas.*

Part (c) presented candidates with a scenario of a company's cassava chips that has been on the market since 2001 and considered a reasonably priced household product, making it the prime choice of snacks for children of the Caribbean region. Candidates were asked to suggest three factors that could have led the cassava chips to be labelled an affordable household product. Part (c) was worth three marks.

For the most part, candidates were able to suggest at least one correct factor that could have led to the chips being labelled an affordable household product by giving varying responses such as:

- *Economical packaging*
- *Competitively priced*
- *Company's use of mass production equipment*
- *Product subsidized by companies/sponsorship*
- *Trusted cost-saving brand*
- *High standards from mass production*

Marks ranged from 0 to 13 and the mean was 5.34 (35.6 per cent).

Paper 032 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment

A case was provided and candidates were required to read and respond to eight structured questions, with four of them containing subparts (a) and (b). This paper was worth 50 marks. This was the first time that this paper was marked on-line.

Candidates were required to apply analytical and evaluative skills to respond appropriately to questions asked. In addition to the case, candidates were given several short scenarios from which they were to respond appropriately using market research techniques.

A short case which was developed from Module IV explored key areas in Records and Information Management. It was entitled 'Bursting at the Seams' and highlighted a manufacturing company which went into business some 20 years ago. During that time, its staff increased and its clientele grew rapidly. The company faced challenges of storage and finding space for all the files accumulated over the years. Customers became angry at the length of time it took to locate their files. The situation worsened as files went missing, became tattered and torn and were strewn on top of cabinets and in boxes on the floor. Equipment used was inadequate and no proper system was in place. Someone in the company eventually saw the need to increase efficiency by introducing new equipment, moving to a larger location and designing a new records management system.

Marks ranged from 1 to 41. The mean score was 16.26

Question 1

Candidates were presented with a scenario of a company in the process of designing a system to store its records for easy retrieval from the time the records enter the company to their final use. Candidates were to suggest how *data collection, data processing and data storage* could result in improving the company's record management system. This was worth six marks.

For the most part, only a few candidates performed satisfactorily on this question, giving correct responses for *data collection as information that comes into the company from internal and external sources through telephone calls, correspondence, email, facsimile and printed documents; data captured from these sources may be used to answer to customers' queries, whilst records may be used for future reference or legal purposes.*

For *data processing*, some candidates gave correct responses such as: *data when sorted, classified, analysed, summarized and routed may be presented in different and systematic formats such as reports for further action; appropriate actions may be taken in a prompt manner with the use of modern equipment.*

Many candidates responded favourably to the part of the question that dealt with *data storage* by supplying appropriate responses such as *records are secured/filed away for safe keeping or future use and speedy retrieval. Data may be stored using different classifications, methods or systems in cabinets or in an electronic database or on microfilms which allow for expansion and safekeeping; passwords and firewalls may be used to maintain confidentiality.*

Question 2

Candidates were required to observe a scenario where the filing system has been neglected for 20 years and so, often took hours to find needed files. Sienna was given six documents, first, to identify the two filing classifications most suitable for the files, and then to place the classified records in the order they would appear in each filing system. This was worth eight marks.

Many candidates failed to identify the two filing classifications and gave strange responses such as centralized and decentralized filing; name and business/organization; printed and written classifications instead of *alphabetical and subject filing systems*.

Few candidates correctly placed the three personal names in alphabetical order:

- George Stanley and Sons
- Patrick, Colin S.
- Peter & Paul Co. Ltd.

For subject filing, only a few candidates placed the files in the correct order as shown:

- Human Resources
- Purchase Requisitions
- Sales Report

Question 3

This question required candidates in Part (a) to cross-reference two letters before filing them. The first letter was from Mrs Olivia Bujay-Allie and the second letter was from Marcia Brown Perfect Hair Salon. This was worth four marks. In Part (b), candidates were to outline two actions Sienna should take while cross-referencing to ensure that the letters can be retrieved quickly when needed. This was worth four marks.

In general, candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this part of the question as they failed to cross-reference the names correctly as follows:

Mrs Olivia Bujay-Allie as: Bujay-Allie, Olivia

Refer to/see under: Allie, Olivia Bujay

OR: Allie, Olivia

Bujay, Olivia

Marcia Browne Perfect Hair Salon should be cross-referenced as follows:

BROWNE, Marcia

See under: Perfect Hair Salon

For Part (b), most candidates could only state one correct action to take while cross-referencing. Few candidates gave correct responses such as:

- Check and inspect letters for supervisor's stamp/initials before any further actions are taken
- Mark the correct indexing order in which the units of the names are written
- Determine the titles under which the documents are to be filed, for example, name of person or firm
- Rename the files using the proper name/subject
- Verify information for name/subject changes
- Prepare cross-referencing cards and place in proper locations or photocopy if necessary
- Place the original documents where they should be filed

Question 4

Candidates were to assume that they are Sienna and that her company is suggesting that adequate space and equipment be provided in the design of the new records management system. They were to advise management by describing five ways the records management system could improve with the provision of adequate space and equipment. This was worth five marks. Among those who attempted this question, correct responses such as the following were given:

- *Able to locate and retrieve records quickly*
- *Provide for faster business communication*
- *Provide safety of customers' documents*
- *Transfer inactive and dead files according to company policy to specified location, archive or microfilm them*
- *Select the most appropriate supplies and state-of-the-art equipment*
- *With added space, management could accommodate more filing equipment, for example, cabinets and computers*
- *Better able to store more information on increased clientele*
- *Computers can facilitate back-up storage of information placed in filing cabinets*
- *Equipment can be strategically placed so unauthorized persons will not access them as passwords would be used to protect confidential information*
- *With computers and other high-tech equipment, files will be stored systematically and work done efficiently by staff*

Question 5

Candidates were given a scenario in which the company wants to buy modern equipment and office supplies for its new records management office whereby the problems of misplaced files, inadequate storage and tattered documents which threaten the security of files could now be solved. Candidates were asked to do two things: First, they were asked to recommend one piece of equipment and one item of office supply for the records management clerks work area and the archive room/storage area. This was worth four marks.

Second, candidates were also asked to state how each piece of equipment and item of office supply would help solve the problems at the company. This was worth four marks

Part (a) was done satisfactorily by most candidates as they were able to recommend appropriate equipment and their uses, such as *filing cabinets, computers and shredders for the records management clerks work station*; for the supplies required for that area, many candidates gave correct responses such as *card index box, cross-referencing cards, out files register, file folders/labels, tickler file and in/out trays*.

For Part (b), only some candidates were able to give correct responses for the equipment and their uses in the archive room such as *microfilm, fiche readers, printers, scanners, shredders, roll film processors, rotary stand/panels and microfiche duplicator and developer*. For the office supplies and their uses in the archive room, few candidates correctly gave:

- *Roll film to store copy of documents*
- *Folders to store inactive documents*
- *Archive storage boxes to store documents/microfiche*
- *Fiche carrier to store individual strips of fiche*
- *Treasury tags to secure loose documents*
- *Microfilm label to label microfilm*
- *Inactive /dead file register for recording files that are not used frequently or no longer in use*

Question 6

Candidates were informed that the project team was involved in brainstorming the benefits of using either the centralized or decentralized system in managing their records. The team decided on using the centralized system. Candidates were to suggest four ways in which centralization of the records could reduce the challenges that management currently faces. This was worth four marks.

Most candidates could only suggest two ways that centralization of the records could reduce the challenges that management faced and these include:

- *Acquire and use modern/specialized equipment to enhance efficiency of operations*
- *Allows for the efficient deployment of specialized staff*
- *Better management/security and control of files*
- *Reduces need to make several copies of the same documents/reduces clutter*
- *Facilitates standardization of procedures*
- *Enables cost-effective methods used to manage documents*
- *Ensures speedy access/retrieval of documents*
- *Facilitates more efficient and economic use of staff/space/equipment*

Question 7

Candidates were informed that Sienna needed to address the chronic situation of archiving the inactive files that were stored in boxes on the floor and on top of cabinets. They were to indicate four quality checks that Sienna should undertake when setting up an inactive system. This was worth four marks.

Only a few candidates were able to indicate appropriate quality checks that should be undertaken when setting up an inactive system and these checks include

- *Check through the boxes/cabinets to ensure that files are in fact, inactive based on company policy*
- *Collect/remove all inactive files from cabinets and close files*
- *Stamp or label them as transfer files*
- *Write names or numbers in the dead files register/log*
- *State where they are stored in the dead file register*
- *Place all the transfer files in specially labelled boxes*
- *Transfer to storage room or records centre*
- *Microfilm essential records to save on space and archive them as back-up files*

Question 8

Candidates were informed that with an increased number of customers and a successful business, the company must now protect its records. Candidates were required to do two things: first, to outline four ways in which a breach of confidence can negatively affect the company. This was worth four marks. Second, candidates were to list three ways in which the company can protect its intellectual property. This part of the question was worth three marks.

Part (a) was fairly well handled by many candidates who gave correct responses such as:

- *Legal action could be taken against the company if confidential files are exposed*
- *Customers are likely to discontinue business with the company*
- *The company could lose money/go bankrupt*
- *Damage of company's image/goodwill*
- *The company might not be able to attract new customers*
- *Competitors could gain huge advantage in trade*
- *Company secrets may be exposed*

Part (b) posed a challenge to many candidates who interpreted *intellectual property* as some physical space that needs security personnel to safeguard it, or to install cameras or lock away the documents. The more able candidates gave correct ways to protect intellectual property such as:

- *Register trademark/log signs on products*
- *Secure patents for their inventions or new products/patent its industrial designs*
- *Display and register service marks/names or symbols on the product*
- *Secure the relevant licenses for manufacturing/trading*
- *Register industrial design of goods*
- *Get approved building plan showing layout design of the company*
- *Display geographical indicators that show where the products are made*
- *Copyright standards for property or documents*

Recommendations

- More exposure to both Paper 02 and Paper 032 type question should be given. Candidates need to develop critical and analytical thinking skills in order to answer the application questions which comprise this paper.
- Since most of the candidates who sit this examination are private candidates, upon registration for the examination, they should be informed that they need to be guided by the syllabus, recommended texts, reports and other support materials.
- Candidates should visit the CXC website and read comments outlined in the subject reports in order to assist them in identifying their strengths and weaknesses.
- Candidates need to pay keen attention to the new contents in the revised syllabus, such as channels of communication, communication flow and climate,

characteristics of an effective records management system, the various offices and the services provided, especially the operations, despatch and transport services. Candidates should read widely on the areas from a number of recommended textbooks and authors.

- In responding to questions, candidates should also note key words (such as *describe, state, suggest, recommend, identify, outline, indicate, give, explain, use information given to complete/record*) to guide them in presenting information in a logical and organized manner.
- Private candidates should also consider seeking assistance from experienced teachers in the school system to guide them in answering questions appropriately and to obtain knowledge in the new content areas.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

MAY/JUNE 2015

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The Office Administration examination is offered in January and May/June of each year. The year 2015 marked the second year of the assessment of the syllabus revised in 2014.

In 2015, some 14 164 candidates sat the June examination. This number represents a decrease from 2014 where 15 701 candidates wrote the examination. Approximately 87 per cent of the candidates achieved Grades I–III, compared with 74 per cent in 2014.

The Office Administration examination comprises four papers of which candidates are required to sit three:

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Paper 031 – School-Based Assessment (SBA)

Paper 032 – Alternative to SBA

Paper 032 is normally done by candidates who do not have the supervision needed to carry out the SBA.

The details of each paper along with candidates' performance on the different papers and the specific strengths and weaknesses observed during the marking exercises are addressed in the following sections.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Paper 01 consisted of 60 multiple-choice items covering the entire syllabus. The items were set to cover Knowledge of content areas and Application of Knowledge. The overall mean was 34.33 or 57.22 per cent compared with 34.16 or 56.93 per cent for May/June 2014. Marks ranged from 10 to 60.

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Paper 02 assessed knowledge of the syllabus content and application of this knowledge to the procedures and processes associated with specialized office activities and routines. The paper consisted of seven questions which were further arranged into two sections. Section I comprised three compulsory questions covering Sections I–VII of the revised syllabus, while Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Sections VIII to XII. Candidates were required to answer three questions from Section II. In total, they were required to answer six questions from this paper. The mean on this paper was 46.64 out of 90 or 51.82 per cent. Marks ranged from zero to 84. Each question on this paper was worth a maximum of 15 marks.

Section I – Compulsory Questions

Question 1

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- the difference between computer literacy and productivity tools
- the difference between collating and addressing machine
- the features of speed dialing and electronic top-up as two of the services that a telephone company provides
- how to compose relevant questions on 'personal taste' and 'image of the firm' before applying for a job
- duties performed in the HR position but not in the data entry position
- how the job description for the HR clerk could assist the data entry clerk to perform her 'new' role effectively.

The mean for this question was 5.89. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

For Part (a) (i), candidates were required to differentiate between computer literacy and productivity tools. This part was worth two marks.

Generally, candidates were able to give the correct response for *computer literacy* such as *basic working knowledge of a computer and its related software*, or *the ability to use and browse the internet*. However, many failed to state correctly what *productivity tools* were and inappropriately related their responses to 'use of tools and equipment to increase production of goods and services', or 'equipment used manually in an office to complete tasks'. Only a few candidates gave the correct response: *a wide range of programmes/software such as word processing, database, desktop publishing and spreadsheet designed to increase efficiency at work*.

In Part (a) (ii), candidates were asked to differentiate between collating machine and addressing machine. This part was worth two marks.

Part (a) (ii) was satisfactorily done for the most part as candidates gave correct responses for collating machine as *an equipment that assembles the sheets of multi-page documents from stack, places them together and repeats the process until the stack is finished*; whereas an addressing machine is one that *prints mailing addresses, bar codes and customized messages on letters, envelopes and labels*.

Part (b) required candidates to describe the features of speed dialing and electronic top-up as two of the services that a telephone company provides. It was worth four marks.

Many candidates gave acceptable responses for speed dialing such as *a service that allows the user to access frequently used numbers stored in the system and use them by pressing fewer keys/codes instead of dialing the full number*; while for electronic top-up, many candidates indicated that *this feature automatically credits airtime to cell/landline phones; also, the transactions involve inputting the number and the amount to be credited; a receipt is then printed*.

Part (c) required candidates to compose two questions each on *personal taste* and *the image of the firm* that an employee should consider before applying for a job. It was worth four marks. Most candidates

were able to score at least one mark each. In many instances, candidates composed correct responses for personal taste such as:

- Do I like to work with people/customers or machines?
- What are my preferences/desires/needs? What attributes/qualities/attitudes/skills are required?
- Am I shy/outgoing or prefer to work behind the scenes/in the limelight?
- What do I want to achieve from the job/is it worth the sacrifice/training/pay?
- What are the working hours (shift work or overtime, weekend, public holidays) and how do these fit with personal plans/responsibilities?
- Is it specialized work? Is there a need to wear uniform? Is it a large or small family-oriented business?

For composition of questions on *the image of the firm*, the following were some of the correct responses given:

- What is the reputation of the firm? How well is the firm known? What is the public's perception of the firm?
- Would workers be proud to work with this firm? What are the working conditions/benefits?
- Is the quality of the goods/services of a high standard? What are the business practices?
- What is the level of job satisfaction/social responsibility/personal contribution/input?
- Is the firm a new company? Does the public knowledge of the company? Is it an established company?

Part (d) (i) introduced a scenario where a colleague who works as a clerk in the HR department had to attend to urgent personal matters overseas. As the data entry clerk you were deployed to her desk but without any information as to what the position entails. Candidates were required to suggest one duty not performed in the data entry position which would be required in the HR clerk's position. Part (d) (i) was worth one mark.

In this part of the question, many candidates failed to get the one mark assigned as they gave incorrect responses such as 'recruit' and 'train' employees which is not a duty of the HR clerk, but for those in management positions; the more able candidates gave correct responses such as:

- Assists with the recruitment process/functions of the HRM office
- Prepares for interviews
- Manages appointments/handles calls
- Organizes meetings; uses equipment efficiently
- Keeps information confidential; stores/keeps personal records/forms/documents
- Liaises with other departments
- Prepares various forms of business communication
- Attends to staff welfare

For Part (d) (ii), candidates were required to explain one way in which a job description for the HR clerk's position could assist the data entry clerk to perform her 'new' role effectively. This part was worth two marks.

Most candidates scored at least one mark for this part of the question. Many of those who scored full marks gave correct responses as:

- Informs the clerk of the specific/main duties of the position to be performed, the summary or purpose of job

- Shows required knowledge, skills, attitudes/attributes of persons who hold positions in the organization; states minimum qualifications and experience required for the job
- Outlines reporting relationships as identified in the organizational chart

Question 2

This question tested candidates' knowledge and understanding of

- the characteristics of an effective records management system
- the meaning of the term *defamation* as it relates to legal issues
- examples of works that may be copied by unauthorized persons
- how to draft follow-up comments for the minute sheet
- precautionary measures that should be considered in moving from a manual to an electronic mode of information management
- benefits of computers over filing cabinets.

The mean for this question was 8.41. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

Part (a) required candidates to list three characteristics of an effective records management system. It was worth three marks. Most candidates responded favourably to this part of the question by giving correct answers such as *accountability, expansion, access, security, compliance, reliability and suitability*.

In Part (b) (i), candidates were required to explain the meaning of the term *defamation* as it relates to legal issues. This part was worth two marks.

Many candidates performed fairly well on this part of the question by giving correct responses such as *an attack on someone's good name with an aim to damage his/her character/reputation/fame; false or malicious misrepresentation of someone's actions or words*.

Part (b) (ii) required candidates to state two examples of work that may be copied by unauthorized persons. It was worth two marks. This part of the question was satisfactorily done as most candidates gave correct responses such as *writings, illustrations, audiovisual, music, photographic, dramatic, architectural works, CDs, drawings, paintings, sculptures, software and computer programmes*.

For Part (c), candidates were to draft a follow-up comment for a minute sheet to ensure the matter is addressed regarding *ten laptops purchased for supervisors that cannot be accounted for, and reports not submitted on a timely basis by two supervisors over the last three months*. It was worth two marks.

Responses to this part of the question were inappropriate as many candidates simply wrote back the two statements in the extract. However, there were some correct responses given such as:

- Identify the persons not submitting reports on a timely basis and reason for lateness.
- Conduct an audit of the laptops, ensuring all can be accounted for.
- Schedule a meeting for supervisors to discuss issues at hand or actions to be taken.
- Implement sign-in and sign-out procedures for equipment borrowed/returned at the end of day.

In Part (d) (i), candidates were to assume that they work in a large government ministry which is in the process of transferring information from filing cabinets to an electronic mode of information management. Candidates were to outline four precautionary measures that should be considered in

moving from a manual to an electronic mode of information management. This part was worth four marks.

Most candidates were able to correctly state between two and three precautionary measures to include:

- Ensure accurate and complete transfer of information to electronic mode by knowledgeable, trained staff.
- Use passwords; secure, systematic and cost-effective methods.
- Consider present and future volume of records/nature of work.
- Cost of equipment/hardware/software/training/maintenance.
- Maintain confidentiality/backup system.
- Ease in handling equipment, efficiency of access, accountability, expansion.
- Centralized or decentralized system.
- Amount of space required.

For Part (d) (ii), candidates were to explain one benefit to the organization if computers rather than filing cabinets are used. This part was worth two marks.

Generally, this part of the question was answered appropriately with correct responses given such as:

- Information can be stored and retrieved /modified quicker from any location.
- Greater security options, for example, use of passwords/specialized staff; use of backup on secondary storage devices, for example, jump drives.
- Greater volume of information can be stored.
- Less paper handling/work, thus creating more space.
- More accurate updates/reduced obsolescence; less 'mixed up' files in borrowing and returning.

Question 3

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- records that may be regarded as corporate records
- legal requirements for holding statutory meetings
- items of information that are usually given on an e-ticket for a flight
- how to write a notice for a staff notice board
- the necessity in obtaining a visa and health certificate for use on a trip.

The mean for this question was 8.15. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

For Part (a), candidates were required to identify three records that may be regarded as corporate records. This part was worth three marks.

Many candidates failed to give the correct responses for Part (a), stating incorrect responses such as 'active, semi-active, inactive, departmental/personal/computer records, date, address and criminal records'. Some candidates, however, gave correct responses such as *minutes, sales records, statements of accounts, registers, contracts, constitution/bylaws, shares certificate and certificate of payment of taxes*.

Part (b) required candidates to state one legal requirement for holding statutory meetings. It was worth two marks. Most candidates were able to score at least one mark in this section, with many giving correct complete responses such as:

- The meeting must be held between the company and its members within a period of 1–6 months from the date on which the company commences business.
- Meeting is required by law to ensure open communication between directors and shareholders.
- Meeting must follow the same format as an AGM; held once per year, for example, agenda, quorum, declaration of dividends, election of officers, statutory reports.

Part (c) required candidates to state two pieces of information that are usually found on an e-ticket for a flight. It was worth two marks. Generally, this part of the question was done well, with most candidates giving correct responses such as *ticket/flight/seat number; dates/times of arrival and departure; airline /class of flight; place of departure/destination; passenger name; fare paid and baggage policy*.

Part (d) stated that Kerry Lindo, the administrative assistant, was given instructions by the principal of Quality Academy to prepare a notice of meeting to inform all senior teachers that the staff meeting of the academy will be held in the boardroom on 28 August 2015 at 10:00 a.m. Candidates were required to write the notice that the administrative assistant would place on the notice board, based on the information given. Part (d) was worth four marks.

This part of the question was done well by most candidates who utilized an appropriate format for designing a notice and included important details such as the name of the document, notice for senior teachers' meeting, the venue, as well as date and time.

In Part (e), worth four marks, candidates were given the scenario where a curriculum officer is going on a tour of educational facilities in a country that is affected by yellow fever; he needs to obtain a visa and health certificate. Candidates were to explain why it was necessary to obtain a visa and a health certificate for use on the trip.

Most candidates performed favourably on this part of the question, earning at least two marks, with many obtaining full marks for correct responses for the use of the visa which is *a document that assures an immigration officer upon arrival at the port of entry into another country that the individual has permission to enter that country and to remain there for a limited duration; it shows that one is eligible to enter another country, or that the visa allows individuals to pass through immigration smoothly as specified by certain countries*. The health certificate, on the other hand, provides *proof that the person entering the country does not have any communicable diseases and has been vaccinated against these diseases; it assures the immigration officer at the port of entry that the traveller is not bringing any contagious disease into the country or on re-entering the home country*.

Section II – Optional Questions

Candidates were required to attempt any three of four questions from this section.

Question 4

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- tasks that must be performed in recruitment and induction as two of the functions specific to the HR management office

- types of leave, other than vacation leave, for which an employee may request time off from work
- external factors that contribute to labour turnover
- how to use an invoice to complete sales transactions
- the formula to use to calculate the correct amount to be paid if a debt is settled within ten days.

The mean for this question was 7.24. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

For Part (a), candidates were required to identify one task each that must be performed in recruitment and induction. This part was worth two marks.

Part (a) was done satisfactorily, with many candidates giving correct responses for tasks performed in recruitment such as:

- Identify the vacancy/kind of person required/do background check.
- Ascertain training skills/qualifications, attitudes and attributes person should possess.
- Decide whether post should be filled internally by promotion.
- Advertise vacant position/s if selection is necessary/identify interest.
- Shortlist and interview applicants.
- Select/hire suitable person to fill vacancy.
- Employ person if proven medically fit and have person sign a contract of employment.

Similarly, many candidates gave correct responses for tasks performed in induction such as:

- Identify training needs/conduct training/orientation sessions.
- Welcome/introduce new employees to the organization.
- Allow new employees to meet other newly recruited persons.
- Acquaint team with the environment, activities and personnel/human resources of the organization.
- Empower new employees to adjust/appreciate their new posts with ease, for example, know what the job is about.

Part (b) required candidates to state two types of leave, other than vacation leave, for which an employee could request time off from work. It was worth two marks.

In most instances, candidates scored full marks, giving correct responses such as *maternity/paternity; sick; compassionate/bereavement; study/education; unpaid/no pay; emergency; casual/departmental and special leave*.

Part (c) required candidates to give two external factors that contribute to employee turnover. It was worth two marks.

This part of the question was done satisfactorily as most candidates gave correct responses such as:

- State of the country's economy
- Competition for job placement, for example, incentives
- Better opportunities/pay
- Migration
- Globalization
- Social climate/factors/location

Part (d) (i) required candidates to use the invoice provided to complete sales transactions between Media Services Ltd and Best Buy Co. Ltd in Guyana. It was worth seven marks. This part of the question was done satisfactorily as many candidates scored full marks, having calculated correctly the cost for each of the three items, the gross price, trade discount and the net price.

Part (d) (ii) required candidates to calculate the amount if a 5% cash discount was given and the final amount to be paid by Media Services Ltd. This was worth two marks. This part of the question was a bit challenging to some candidates who did not calculate the cash discount correctly and hence, did not arrive at the correct final amount to be paid by the buyer.

This question was the second most popular optional question.

Question 5

This question was designed to test candidates' knowledge and understanding of

- the term *just-in-time*
- the disadvantages of having too much stock
- the functions of the marketing office
- how to complete a purchase order form that was provided
- the action to be taken by an employee if the paper delivered was the wrong size.

The mean for this question was 9.17. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

For Part (a), candidates were required to explain the meaning of the term *just-in-time* as it relates to inventory management. This part was worth two marks.

For the most part, candidates were able to score full marks as they gave the correct response as *purchase of materials and production if items are done as needed or at the required time to meet the actual demands of customers and not before.*

For Part (b), candidates were required to state two disadvantages of having too much stock. This part was worth two marks.

Part (b) was done satisfactorily as many candidates gave correct responses such as:

- Capital would be tied up that could otherwise earn money.
- Certain items, for example, perishable good might deteriorate.
- Storage space is occupied/stockroom becomes overcrowded.
- Higher storage fees/security and insurance costs/theft.
- Stock may become obsolete or go out of fashion.

For Part (c), candidates were required to state two functions of the marketing office. This part was worth two marks.

Most candidates were able to state at least one function of the marketing office and their responses included:

- Promoting the firm's products/services
- Designing marketing strategies/innovative ideas
- Organizing promotional activities

- Preparing a marketing budget for the firm
- Using different media to advertise the firm's products
- Liaising with advertising agencies

For Part (d) (i), candidates were required to complete a purchase order, using the form provided. This part was worth 7 marks.

Part (d) (i) was done well by most candidates who inserted the correct information in the different sections of the purchase order, including *quantity, description, unit/total columns and by whom the purchase order was prepared.*

For Part (d) (ii), candidates were required to state the action the purchaser should take if the paper delivered was the wrong size. This part was worth two marks. Many candidates scored only one mark on this part of the question as they gave partial responses. Some candidates stated incorrectly that they would 'request a refund', but the more able candidates stated appropriately that they would *make a note of the errors on the document presented; call and inform the firm of the error and ask the firm to deliver the correct size paper as soon as possible, as well as to inform the accounts department not to make payment until the correct size paper has been received.*

This was the most popular of the optional questions.

Question 6

This question was designed to test candidates' understanding of

- the functions of the corporate communications clerk
- the tasks that the customer service clerk should perform in assisting with the maintenance of a website
- the rules of good customer service
- the effects of poor customer service on an organization
- appropriate actions to take, other than firing, to improve a clerk's treatment of customers.

The mean for this question was 7.92. Scores ranged from zero to 15.

For Part (a), candidates were required to list four functions of the corporate communications clerk. This part was worth four marks. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, listing at least two correct functions of the corporate communications clerk including:

- Promotes and enhances the public image of the company
- Interfaces with media houses and advertising agencies to create public awareness of goods and services
- Assists in creating the company's newsletter/magazine/calendar to highlight firm's activities
- Maintains the company's website with up-to-date information
- Plans social activities/liaises with employees and their families
- Coordinates and sponsors events that show the company's corporate social responsibility

Part (b) required candidates to identify two tasks that the customer service clerk should perform in assisting with the maintenance of a website. It was worth two marks.

Most candidates were able to score at least one mark for this part of the question, giving correct

responses such as:

- Researches correct information to be accessed/placed on the website
- Identifies outdated information to be removed
- Processes/posts documents/information to be uploaded/answers questions
- Proofreads information to be placed on the site.

For Part (c) (i), worth three marks, candidates were required to read the conversation between an angry customer and the customer service clerk at Murrell Motors, and then asked to identify three rules of good customer service relations which the customer service clerk at Murrell Motors failed to observe.

This part of the question was fairly well handled by most candidates who gave correct responses such as:

- Handle customer complaints politely and with patience/respect.
- Have knowledge of the product's expected arrival.
- Answer questions/queries promptly.
- Make the customer feel he is always right and that his concerns are important.
- Update customer about the status of parts/products requested.
- Offer apology/liase between customer and company.

Part (c) (ii) required candidates to state three ways in which such actions would affect the company if the clerk continues to deal with customers in the same manner in which the angry customer was treated. It was worth three marks.

Generally, this part of the question was done well by candidates who gave correct responses such as:

- Loss of customers/company loyalty/ business lost to competitors.
- Reduction of profits/sales.
- Company could gain a bad reputation.
- Customer will be dissatisfied/discourage potential customers.
- Possible failure of business/could become a court issue.

For Part (c) (iii), candidates were required to state three actions that the company could take to improve the clerk's handling of customers other than removing/firing her from the job. This part was worth three marks.

Candidates performed well on this part of the question, giving correct responses such as:

- Provide training.
- Reprimand/warn/discipline.
- Assign a mentor/supervisor.
- Provide counselling/meeting.
- Place on probation/suspend/demote.
- Self-evaluation/reflection/apologize.

Question 7

This question was designed to test candidates' understanding of

- the duties of a clerk in a despatch office
- the kind of information that is found in a catalogue other than the price/pricelist

- appropriate action a seller could take if goods are not dispatched within the time specified
- benefits to gain by using an enquiry to get information from suppliers
- the next step to take in the purchasing procedures after deciding on the supplier
- ways by which a company could maintain its mailing list.

The mean for this question was 7.63. Scores ranged from 1 to 15. This question was the least popular of the optional questions.

For Part (a), candidates were required to list three duties of the clerk in a despatch office. This part was worth three marks. Many candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this part of the question, giving mainly 'liaising with other departments'. The more able candidates gave various correct responses such as:

- Completes documents, for example, manifest, delivery note, destination sheet, freight note, bill of lading and airway bill
- Verifies the correct goods are sent/coordinates delivery of goods
- Maintains a database of couriers/transport contractors/agents
- Allocates loads to available vehicles/monitors the despatch and transport of goods on a timely basis
- Adheres to special legal requirements for packing and transporting goods

Part (b) required candidates to identify three items of information, apart from the price and price list, that may be found in a catalogue. It was worth three marks.

Most candidates were able to score at least one mark on this part of the question, giving correct responses to include:

- A description/illustration/benefit of items/goods/services being offered
- Stock of product number
- Procedures for ordering the product, for example, site from which to order, method of payment, contact information
- Discounts being offered/special offers
- Delivery terms/terms and conditions of sales/return policy

For Part (c), candidates were given an extract of an advice note to suggest two actions that the seller could take if goods are not despatched to a customer by a specific date. This part was worth two marks.

Part (c) seemingly presented a challenge to some candidates who incorrectly stated responses like 'refund the customer' or 'make a new order'. Many candidates gave at least one correct response to include:

- Apologize to buyer/offer incentive/discount.
- Investigate the cause of the delay/write a report.
- Communicate with buyer promptly.
- Arrange for despatch at earliest possible date.

In Part (d) (i), candidates were given a scenario about a business owner who wants to get some information from a supplier about products for his business, and who is advised to use an enquiry. Candidates were required to advise of one benefit to be gained by using an enquiry to get information from suppliers. This part was worth two marks.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, invariably giving correct responses such as:

- Provision of detailed quotations in turn from suppliers which allow for negotiations of discounts and timeframes for supplying products/choosing the best terms of sale.
- Quotations are usually accompanied by leaflets, catalogues of price lists, giving details of the products/choosing the best products.
- Quotations can be compared with those received from other suppliers for decision-making/choosing the best price;
- Adequate information provided to enable selection of ‘best’ supplier.

For Part (d) (ii), candidates were required to state the next step to take in the purchasing procedures after deciding on the supplier. This part was worth one mark.

Many candidates gave the correct response as *place order for products needed using a purchase order form*.

In Part (e), candidates were informed that *you are assigned the responsibility of maintaining a mailing list for the sales department at Yoo Toob IT Resources Inc. A most valued customer handed you a letter, complaining of not receiving any correspondence from the company since moving to her new address*. Candidates were to suggest two ways a company could maintain its mailing list to communicate effectively with customers. This part was worth four marks.

Many candidates responded satisfactorily to this part of the question by giving correct responses such as:

- Complete the current mailing list with adequate information on existing and potential customers.
- Computer-generated to produce accurate and updated information at regular intervals.
- Deletion of all old addresses and new ones added as the need arises/updating.
- Attended to by a responsible and reliable sales clerk/personnel to maintain database.
- Giving no unnecessary information or extra addresses which would inflate the cost of mailing, printing and stationery.
- Available for optimal use at any given time by authorized personnel.

Recommendations

The examining committee would like to recommend the following approaches to teachers.

- Focus on the new contents in the revised syllabus (2012) which was tested for the first time in June 2014, paying attention to changes in the names of some offices and their particular functions.
- Note the format of the examinations, especially Papers 02 (Sections I and II), 031 and 032 on pages 5 and 6.
- Give students hands-on practice in completing the petty cash book — to correct errors in the extension/analysis columns to correspond correctly with appropriate headings, how to record balance c/d and b/d and restore imprest, placing these in their correct places in the petty cash book.

- Place much emphasis on the clerks in the different offices and their roles and responsibilities, separate and apart from the functions of each of the offices, for example, accounts, procurement and inventory management, sales, marketing and operations and despatch and transport offices.
- Utilize a variety of teaching methods, including the integrated approach to teaching and learning OA, as well as cross-disciplinary collaboration involving for example, teachers of English, Accounts, EDPM, among others, for articulation and reinforcement of important concepts, procedures and processes.
- Make good use of accompanying support materials such as past papers, business documents, relevant textbooks, CDs, reports posted on the CXC website and include guest speakers and educational field trips as part of the delivery of the subject area.

The committee wishes to recommend the following to candidates.

- Visit the CXC website and read reports posted, join small study groups and network with teachers and peers.
- Make study schedules or timetables and stick to them consistently and conscientiously, to help in preparing adequately for the examination.

Paper 032 – Alternative to the SBA

This paper targeted private individuals who would not have the opportunity to complete SBA projects as school candidates. It took the form of a written examination designed to test candidates' ability to use their personal experiences of routine office activities acquired through observation or from performing the actual office tasks as real employees.

The paper consisted of seven short, structured essay-type questions, based on an office case entitled 'Cheques' and Balances. For this examination, the case focused on Section IX of the syllabus which covers Accounts and Financial Services.

It was noted in this paper that some areas in accounts continue to challenge candidates and affect their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 20.31 or 40.62 per cent, compared with 23.78 or 48 per cent in 2014. Marks ranged from zero to 47 out of a maximum of 50.

The case is outlined below.

Harlington's Business College is an offshore educational institution located in Hamilton, Bermuda. The college has been experiencing some challenges with significant errors and omissions in its accounting records and documents over the last two years. Despite all of this, the college continued to make a sizeable profit. Duties of the accounts clerk include receiving payments from students, making out cheques to suppliers and preparing wages for some employees, among other things.

Halle Marson is hired with good references to the department to work closely with the accountant, Shaun Andrews. She is tasked with correcting some of its problems and to deal with incomplete documents, identify errors and make recommendations as necessary.

Question 1

Based on information provided, candidates were required to complete a wage sheet for two employees at Harlington's Business College for 15–19 August 2014 to show overtime hours, overtime pay, gross wages, national insurance, income tax, pension, total deductions and net wages. The question was worth eight marks.

Many candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this question as they failed to calculate correctly for the different areas based on information provided. Those who did well on this question seemed to have a good knowledge of accounts and arrived at the correct answers in a sequential manner.

Marks ranged from zero to eight and the mean was 2.65 or 33.13 per cent.

Question 2

In Part (a), candidates were informed that Shaun was asked to secure \$150 000 from the profits of Harlington's Business College to open an account to assist financially challenged students in paying for their core areas. Candidates were required to give two reasons why Shaun would want to open a savings account rather than a current account. This part was worth two marks.

Most candidates were able to score one mark on this part of the question to include correct responses such as:

- Normally used for funds that are not intended for frequent access/use, unlike a current account/savings for future use.
- Does not require the use of cheque books which are more costly.
- The account holder earns interest on funds/deposits held in the savings account; no interest paid on current accounts.
- Account holder is not charged to use a savings account.

For Part (b), candidates were to suggest two reasons why Shaun's decision to deposit \$150 000 into the central bank rather than the commercial bank would not be a wise one. This part was worth two marks.

Part (b) was unsatisfactorily done by many candidates who appeared to have limited knowledge of the functions of the central bank. More able candidates gave correct responses such as:

- The central bank is a bank to the government and commercial banks but not to individuals and businesses.
- Lends to government and commercial banks with interest, not to customers/businesses.
- Implements government's monetary policies, not for businesses/maintains a record of the country's financial position, not individuals.
- Does not offer financial advice to customers or make payments on their behalf.

In Part (c), candidates were advised that on reading some information from a brochure on the operations of a credit union, Shaun is further contemplating whether to open an account at the credit union. Candidates were to outline three benefits the college would experience if Shaun decides to deposit the money in the credit union. This part was worth three marks.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, scoring for the most part, two out of the three marks, to include correct responses such as:

- Offers most commercial banks' services/packages/incentives
- Members with accounts become owners
- Interest rates on loans are often lower/interest rates on savings are often higher
- Members have a say in the election of officials
- Often less formal than banks/charges less fees than banks for services
- Easy access to loans

In Part (d), candidates were informed that during the financial year, Shaun receives a tangible donation of US\$20 000 from past students to assist financially challenged students. He wishes to use the service of a bureau of exchange/cambio. Candidates were to explain one reason for Shaun's decision to utilize a bureau of exchange/cambio. This part was worth two marks.

Many candidates responded favourably to this part of the question, giving correct responses such as: *Customers exchange one currency for another; they accept most currencies; convenient opening and closing hours; competitive exchange rates; accessibility to larger amounts of foreign exchange.*

Marks ranged from zero to nine and the mean was 3.26 or 36.22 per cent.

Question 3

Candidates were informed in Part (a) that Halle was assigned the task of checking through a batch of dishonoured cheques as there were quite a few of these for which payments were refused. Candidates were to give four suggestions Halle could provide as reasons for the dishonoured cheques. This part was worth four marks.

Generally, this part of the question was done well as candidates gave correct responses such as:

- Insufficient funds/not enough money in the account/drawer's account has been frozen
- Stop order on cheque/errors on cheque
- Words and figures differ
- Cheque not signed/some information/details omitted
- Out of date/stale cheque/date six months passed/postdated/future dated
- Signature different from that on bank's records
- Alterations/deletions not initialled

In Part (b), candidates were required to complete a cheque, including the stub/counterfoil for the amount of \$1500 to be paid to MOJ Publishers for a set of books purchased for the college library. They were to use the current date. This part was worth six marks.

A few candidates wrote the information to be inserted on the cheque in the wrong places, while others appeared uncertain as to how to complete the stub/counterfoil. Many candidates on the other hand, scored between four and six marks on this part of the question.

Marks ranged from zero to ten and the mean was 5.41 or 54.1 per cent.

Question 4

In this question, a scenario was presented where *in checking through documents, Halle discovered that the current petty cash system was not being properly used nor was the book correctly written up and, as*

a result, a few cheques were found written for amounts as little as \$7. To prevent these problems from continuing, Halle has the task of getting the petty cash system operating correctly again.

For Part (a), candidates were required to use the petty cash form provided to correct any errors identified. This part was worth two marks. In Part (b), worth six marks, candidates had to balance the account and show the amount to restore the imprest.

Both Parts (a) and (b) were done unsatisfactorily by most candidates. More able candidates (some of whom do accounts as part of their subject disciplines), were able to identify the errors and complete the petty cash book by correctly placing them under the relevant extension/analysis columns. Some candidates recorded correctly the total for the month, the amounts for each of the extension columns, the balance carried down and brought down, and showed the correct amount to restore the imprest.

Marks ranged from zero to eight and the mean was 1.56 or 19.5 per cent.

Question 5

In this question, candidates were informed that in order to improve the department's performance, the accountant, Shaun Andrews, considered ordering some up-to-date accounting software. Before ordering, he wants to be assured of ways in which the department could improve efficiency from using such software.

Candidates were required to outline three benefits the department would experience if management implemented the up-to-date accounting software. This question was worth three marks.

Candidates performed satisfactorily in this question, giving correct responses such as:

- Meets organizational needs for usage, equipment, training and security
- Speed/accuracy/ease of processing information
- Large storage for students' records
- Automatic calculation of payroll and linked entries/automatic updating of accounting records
- Recording of bank receipts/makes payments to suppliers
- Records/information can be easily stored and retrieved
- Database can be organized/integrated with spreadsheet
- Records of suppliers' invoices can be kept electronically
- Automatic updating of students' accounts in the purchases ledger

Marks ranged from zero to three and the mean was 2.11 or 70.33 per cent.

Question 6

Halle has discovered that Harlington's Business College often stores large sums of cash on the compound and this increases the chances of robbery and theft. Candidates were to recommend three approaches that the college should take in safeguarding the collection and storage of cash. This question was worth six marks.

Many candidates received full marks for this question and gave correct responses which included that the college should utilize/ensure

- credit transfer — use a single cheque to be deposited into a number of accounts/pay bills or

staff

- credit cards/ATM debit cards/standing order/night safe/armoured security/passwords to access storage facility of money
- lines of credit — credit arranged with suppliers where buyers pay at the end of a specified period
- students pay fees online instead of paying large sums of cash on campus
- persons who collect money should not have access to where money is stored/documentation of funds
- students pay fees directly into the bank through the issue of tuition vouchers or by bank drafts or cheques
- cash is securely locked away and keys kept safely in a secure environment/safe
- direct deposit into an account
- the college takes out insurance to cover possible losses.

Marks ranged from zero to six and the mean was 4.41 or 73.5 per cent.

Question 7

In Part (a), an extract of the cash book and bank reconciliation statement was presented for Harlington's Business College for the month of May 2014. Candidates were required to prepare the updated cash book and a bank reconciliation statement for the college starting with the cash book balance. This part was worth four marks.

Generally, Part (a) was unsatisfactorily done. Those candidates who are apparently adept in accounts or math scored full marks for this part of the question and gave the correct closing balance in the updated cash book of \$3160 and correct closing balance in the bank reconciliation statement of \$2460. They also correctly recorded entries in both the cash book and the bank reconciliation statement.

For Part (b), based on the information provided in the cash book and bank statement, candidates were to suggest two reasons why the accountant would want to reconcile the cash book of Harlington's Business College with the bank statement. This part was worth two marks.

Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, scoring at least one mark and giving correct responses which included:

- There is a difference between the closing balance in the cash book of \$1880 and the bank statement of \$2460.
- Bank charges subtracted but not known until the statement arrives.
- Interests/deposits added of which the account holder is not aware until receipt of the statement.
- There are items in the cash book that are not recorded in the bank statement and vice versa.
- Human error — calculations or recording of incorrect amounts.
- There could be a time difference when the transactions are recorded in the college's cash book and the bank's records.

Marks ranged from zero to six and the mean was 0.91 or 15.17 per cent.

Recommendations

Candidates need to:

- Visit the CXC website and read comments presented in the subject reports to assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- Get adequate practice in completing wage sheets, petty cash forms, cheques, including counterfoils/stubs, cash book and bank reconciliation statements.
- Note key words in the examination questions which provide guidance in presenting information in a logical and organized manner, for example, *identify, list, make recommendations, give reasons, complete, outline, explain*.

Paper 031 – School Based Assessment (SBA)

The SBA component of the Office Administration course is designed to assist students in acquiring specific competencies for application in real-life situations. The research project is intended to develop in students the basic skills of research and requires them to collect data in a scientific manner.

The information gathered is compiled in a report and is assessed on three criteria: Preparation, Gathering Data, and Presentation with a weighting of 13, 15 and 22 marks, respectively. This paper was worth 50 marks. The mean was 34.40 or 68.81 per cent.

Criterion 1: Preparation

- Many students generated fairly good topics for their projects for the year 2015 on Office Orientation and Procurement and Inventory Management (page 46 of revised syllabus). However, some topics were too wide and not clearly stated. In many instances, the title page lacked some requisite elements such as the territory and candidate number.
- Most students provided an appropriate table of contents (TOC) to include a heading and list of topics, but there were instances where they did not number the pages correctly or none at all in the project to correspond with the TOC. Page numbers were too often represented in bands, for example, 3–5 which is not acceptable.
- Some students failed to identify a specific department in the firm for their project, while others failed to provide aims that were consistent with the topic under investigation. There were times when aims were confused with functions, and vice versa.
- Most students included correspondence requesting permission to conduct the project. However, some failed to provide an appropriate salutation which is aligned to an acceptable complimentary close, for example: Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs/Dr Maraj with Yours sincerely/respectfully; Dear Sir/Madam with Yours faithfully/respectfully (Yours truly is reserved for friendly/personal letters). General layout and signatory were not presented in an appropriate manner, for example, a fully blocked letter (all lines flush at the left margin) must utilize open punctuation and semi-blocked and indented with mixed and closed punctuation, respectively.

Criterion 2: Gathering Data

- Most students provided a suitable specimen of a data-gathering instrument. However, an explanation of *why* the particular instrument was chosen above all others and *how* the instrument was used must be given.
- In many instances, students presented the five research questions but invariably were inconsistent with the aims, functions and topics under investigation. The five questions must be written on a new page separate and apart from those on the questionnaire.

- On many occasions, students failed to identify legislation governing the workplace. However, most were able to provide a health and safety practice they observed and a staff rule they had to comply with in carrying out the project.

Criterion 3: Presentation

- Most students produced an acceptable report consisting of limitations, findings and recommendations, some of which were not thoroughly proofread to eliminate basic spelling, grammatical and structural errors. Besides, in assessing the impact of office equipment used in the business selected for the project, these equipment should represent those observed in the particular department and *not* how the students used the equipment to do their project.
- In some cases, the four-column table which included the equipment used in the firm, provided general uses of the equipment identified instead of specific uses of the equipment by the *department studied*.
- Generally, students did not follow the guidelines for preparing the bibliography to represent the different sources of information. The 6th edition of the APA or MLA manuals should be consulted or students can simply, follow the guidelines given in the OA syllabus, but note that for publications, the *title* should be included and for internet sites, no search engine, like Google and Yahoo, should be given.
- Most students scored satisfactory marks on the overall presentation of the project.

Major Strengths

Neat and well arranged, word-processed and handwritten projects enclosed in folders or bounded.

Weaknesses

- Failure to use, in some instances, the current mark scheme with 13, 15 and 22 marks for Criteria 1, 2 and 3, respectively, and to attach the mark scheme to the project to indicate how marks were awarded.
- Failure to state how students became aware of the legislation (for example, from resource personnel or company manual) regulating the workplace, and failure to state the name of the Act/Law and the year enacted.
- Failure to state the *department* of the organization under study.

Recommendations to Teachers

- Pay keen attention to the SBA requirements starting from page 46 in the revised syllabus (2012), also the SBA project components and the Topics for School-Based Assessment. Pay special attention to the years 2016–2018 where either two or three topics/sections are given in each year from which to generate titles for individual projects.
- Encourage students to pay keen attention to detail in order to earn scores close to, or at the maximum marks allocated. Each student doing the SBA project should have access to a copy of the Detailed Criteria and Mark Scheme.
- Monitor students consistently throughout the project to ensure that it is done in an acceptable manner; also ensure that it is the students' own work, and that the stipulated guidelines in the current syllabus are followed.
- Visit the CXC website and download the report and share with colleagues and students.

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE[®]
EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2017

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The Office Administration (OA) examination is offered in January and May/June each year. In January 2017, some 580 candidates sat the examination compared with 764 in the 2016 sitting. The areas of weakness will be addressed in the detailed comments on individual questions on the different question papers.

Three papers were offered at the General Proficiency level to ensure broad coverage of the syllabus and accessibility to a wider range of the candidate population. The objectives tested were chosen from all 12 sections of the Office Administration syllabus. The papers offered are as follows:

Paper 01	—	Multiple Choice
Paper 02	—	Short Answer
Paper 032	—	Alternative to School-Based Assessment (SBA)

Paper 01 consisted of 60 multiple choice items covering the entire syllabus. The items set covered knowledge of the content area and application of the knowledge. The overall mean was 29.03 compared with 30.97 for January 2016. Performance this year was consistent with that of 2016.

Paper 02 consisted of two sections. Section I comprised three compulsory questions drawn from Sections I to VII of the syllabus. These questions were attempted by the majority of candidates.

Section II consisted of four optional questions taken from Sections VIII to XII. Candidates were required to answer three questions from Section II, in total, six questions from Paper 02. This paper assessed knowledge and application of procedures and processes associated with office routines and activities. The 2017 January sitting will be the *last* to administer seven questions for candidates to choose six. In June 2017, both Sections I and II will present three questions each for candidates to do all six.

The overall mean for this paper was 46.82 compared with 36.33 in 2016. There are, however, some areas that continue to pose difficulty to candidates and these are addressed in the detailed comments.

This paper targeted private individuals who would not have had the opportunity to complete SBA projects as school candidates.

It took the form of a written examination designed to test candidates' ability to use their personal experiences regarding routine office activities, whether acquired through observation or from performing the actual office tasks as real employees.

The paper consisted of seven short, structured essay-type questions, based on an office case, with four of the questions containing subsections — Parts (a) and (b). For this examination, the case focused mainly on Section IX of the syllabus which covers Accounts and Financial Services.

It was quite evident from the performance on this paper that some areas continue to challenge candidates and ultimately affect their overall performance. The overall mean for this paper was 12.48 compared with 24.98 in 2016.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 02 – Short Answer

Section I comprised three compulsory questions and each question was worth 15 marks.

Question 1

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- the purpose of a shredder and a risograph
- ways to improve on attributes such as work ethic, integrity, deportment and self-esteem to become an excellent employee
- breach of confidentiality as a possible cause of conflict or inappropriate act in the work situation
- ways an organization could be affected by fallout in relationships due to breach of confidentiality
- actions to be taken to restore a broken relationship
- how to compose a greeting for an automated answering machine for a flower shop.

Part (a) required candidates to state the purpose for which businesses would purchase a shredder and a risograph. It was worth four marks.

Most candidates stated correctly that the shredder was used to destroy confidential and sensitive information before disposing of such information. On the other hand, the majority of candidates did not know what a risograph is, as they associated a risograph with graphs instead of stating that *large organizations use this equipment to carry out high-speed, high-volume copying and printing of documents at an economical rate.*

In Part (b), candidates were to assume that they were recently evaluated by their supervisor on the attributes of work ethic, integrity, deportment and self-esteem. They were rated *fair* on work ethic and integrity and *weak* on deportment and self-esteem. They were required to suggest one way in which they could improve on each of these attributes to become the excellent employee they are aspiring to be. This part was worth four marks.

It appeared that many candidates did not know what some of these attributes are. The more capable candidates gave the correct response for *work ethic* as *the ability to improve the quality of work by ensuring it is neat, well organized, relevant and sufficiently detailed, as well as being accurate, well researched, being on time for work and attending work regularly.*

Many candidates explained *integrity* as *being completely trustworthy, honest and confidential in all matters; no degree of compromise or deception; setting high standards.* For *deportment*, some candidates gave correct responses such as *display positive behaviour and manners at*

all times; pay attention to personal appearance and good grooming to create lasting impressions; appearance to be consistent with requirements of the workplace as in the case of uniform requirements and paying careful attention to personal hygiene.

Many candidates explained *self-esteem* as *putting a high value/premium on self/believing in self; confidence to perform at one's best at all times and demonstrating a high sense of self-worth/pride/self-respect.*

In Part (c) (i), candidates were presented with the following scenario:

Ramon Rigby is a fun-loving, kind and sociable boss. He converses a lot with his workers and often gives advice to individuals to get their work done efficiently. Everyone develops a family-approach to getting tasks done. Jane Willis, an employee, has a personal problem and shares it with her boss, Mr Rigby. The following day, Jane hears about her problem from two of her co-workers. She was devastated.

Candidates were asked to identify the cause of conflict or inappropriate act in the work situation. This part was worth one mark.

Generally, candidates responded well to this part of the question, giving correct answers such as *breach of confidentiality, mistrust, and divulging employee's personal problem/secret.*

Part (c) (ii) asked candidates in what two ways the organization could be affected by the breakdown in the relationship between Mr Rigby and Ms Willis. It was worth two marks.

Candidates responded quite well to this question. Correct responses included, but were not limited to:

- Declines in productivity
- Organization conflicts
- Increased absenteeism
- Loss of confidence by customers

In Part (c) (iii), candidates were asked to describe one action Mr Rigby could take to restore the relationship between himself and Ms Willis. It was worth two marks.

Most candidates responded correctly by stating that *Mr Rigby should sincerely apologize and seek to regain the trust of workers by ensuring confidentiality is maintained at all times; investigate the matter and admit to wrongdoing and institute disciplinary procedures and apply to anyone, at whatever level, who breaches confidentiality.*

Part (d) presented candidates with the following information: *The managers of Gorgeous Flowers Ltd are in the process of replacing their telephone operator with an automated answering service.* Candidates were required to write a greeting, in not more than 15 words, to be recorded for the flower shop. This part was worth two marks.

This part of the question was satisfactorily done as most candidates gave correct responses which included *Thank you for calling Gorgeous Flowers Ltd. If you know your party's extension, dial it now, or dial zero for the operator; Thank you ... we are unable to take your call right now, if you leave your name and number, we will get right back to you.*

Question 2

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- barriers to communication that may interfere with the effective transfer of information in an organization
- the functions of mail-handling machines such as franking, collating and sealing machines
- steps to be followed when doing a mail merge
- how to write a letter, using the correct date, to apply for leave to attend to urgent personal matters
- actions an organization could take to ensure that the confidentiality of files is maintained at all times.

Part (a) required candidates to identify two barriers to communication that may interfere with the effective transfer of information in an organization. It was worth two marks.

Most candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving correct barriers to communication such as the following:

- Biases — personal, cultural/grapevine and perceptual
- Language/semantics
- Literacy skills
- Time/noise constraints
- Physical impairment
- Differences in age/gender/attitude/education/status
- Technical and emotional issues

Part (b) (i) asked candidates to state the function of each of the following mail-handling machines: franking, collating and sealing. It was worth three marks.

Generally, this part of the question was unsatisfactorily done as most candidates failed to give the correct function of each of the machines, invariably restating key words such as 'collate' documents or 'seal' mails. A few candidates gave the correct response for the franking machine as *a machine that prints postage on items to be mailed and eliminates the need to stick on postage stamps*. For the collating machine, candidates said it was used *to assemble the pages of documents in the correct sequence*. For the sealing machine, candidates said it was used *to pull the envelopes to be sealed for larger volumes of mail in a matter of minutes*.

For Part (b) (ii), candidates were asked to state any two steps to follow when doing a mail merge. It was worth two marks.

This part of the question was incorrectly answered by many candidates. The more capable candidates gave the correct steps such as *prepare a form letter with the correct information — names and addresses — to be inserted; prepare a mailing list with names and addresses and combine the form letter with the mailing list to create personalized letters for each recipient.*

Part (c) asked candidates to use the current date to write a letter. The following scenario was given:

Assume you are Kamal Scott of 17 Tulip Avenue, St James, Barbados. You are presently working as an accounts clerk at Phillips Publishing House, 19 Central Highway, Bridgetown, St Michael. Although you are deeply committed to your job, you cannot help but request two weeks in July to attend to some urgent personal matters.

This part was worth six marks.

Generally, the vital parts of the letter were incorrectly placed and inconsistently written. A sample of the expected letter production is shown in the following fully-blocked style.

17 Tulip Avenue
St James
BARBADOS

9 January 2017

The Human Resource Officer/Manager
Phillips Publishing House
19 Central Highway
Bridgetown
BARBADOS

Dear Sir/Madam

I am kindly requesting two weeks leave from work in July 2017 to attend to some urgent personal matters.

Thanks for your attention and consideration.

Yours faithfully/respectfully

Kamal Scott

*(Please note that every letter MUST be addressed to the appropriate personnel, the HRO/M; the date follows the inside address; the salutation is 'Dear Sir/Madam' as No Name was given and the complimentary close should match the salutation — 'Yours faithfully/respectfully'; a suitable closing paragraph should be included **before** the complimentary close and the assumed name should be used — Kamal Scott).*

For Part (d), candidates were required to suggest two actions organizations could take to ensure that the confidentiality of files is maintained at all times. This part was worth two marks. It was unsatisfactorily done by many candidates who failed to give correct responses such as the following:

- Ensure all employees are sworn to secrecy.
- Implement a policy for maintaining confidentiality/improving security.
- Offer training to emphasize the importance of this attribute.
- Those who breach confidentiality should apologize publicly.
- Apply sanctions/penalties.
- Limit the number of persons who have access to information/files.
- Use passwords.

Question 3

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- how to maintain effective interpersonal relationships and how to promote a positive image of a business
- items of information that may be obtained from a passport
- how to write a combined notice of meeting and agenda.

For Part (a), candidates were presented with the following information: Two major roles of the receptionist are to *maintain effective interpersonal relationships between the organization and the public*, and to *promote a positive image of the business*.

For each of the roles which was presented in a table format, candidates were to give two guidelines/tips to a prospective receptionist on how he/she could perform the role effectively.

This part of the question, worth four marks, was done satisfactorily by most candidates who gave correct responses for how to maintain effective interpersonal relationships which included the following:

- Greet each visitor politely/professionally according to the time of day and offer to help/seek advice if needed.
- Make persons feel welcome by acknowledging them with a smile and eye contact even if you are on the telephone.
- Do not allow a visitor to wait for too long without notifying the person he/she is seeing.
- Provide a visitor's log and pen to write information.
- If a visitor has to wait, inform him/her of the facilities available such as coffee machine, magazines and where the toilets are situated.

Correct responses for how to promote a positive image of the business included the following:

- Choose attire that reflects the image/colour of the firm/observe good personal hygiene.
- Organize your work station neatly/ promptly remove dirty cups/glasses/avoid eating in front of clients.
- Never discuss anyone with staff or a visitor/display the right attitude.
- Be polite/pleasant/welcoming; offer reading material/refreshment.
- Never judge anyone by his/her appearance; treat everyone equally.

In Part (b), candidates were asked to identify three items of information that may be obtained from a passport, other than the traveller's name. It was worth three marks.

Generally, this part of the question was done well by candidates who gave correct responses which included the following:

- Traveller's place/date of birth/photograph/gender
- Place/date of issue/origin of the passport
- Passport number/date of expiry
- Emergency contact information
- Occupation/signature of the traveller
- Maiden surname of female holder
- Visa/names of the countries visited/duration of those visits

For Part (c), the following information was given:

The next meeting of the Student Council will be held in the Senior Students' Meeting Room at 1500 hours on Friday, 5 June 2017 to discuss the proposed changes to the school's IT policy. Refreshments will be provided. Please call me on extension 2574 if you are unable to attend. Items for the agenda include welcome, minutes of the previous meeting, matters arising, proposed changes to the school's IT policy, any other business, date and time of next meeting, apologies for absence, Joshua Brinks, Council Secretary

As the new Student Council Secretary, candidates were to use the information provided to draft a combined notice and agenda of meeting for the Orion High School. They were to ensure that the information is placed under the appropriate headings and that the items on the agenda are written based on parliamentary procedures or Robert's Rule of Order.

This part of the question, worth eight marks, presented a challenge to many candidates who appeared not to know the correct format for writing a combined notice and agenda of a meeting, as the information given was placed under both the notice and the agenda and not according to parliamentary procedures. The expected response is as follows:

MOUNT ORION HIGH SCHOOL

NOTICE OF MEETING

The next meeting of the Student Council will be held in the Senior Students' Meeting Room at 1500 hours on Friday, 25 June 2017 to discuss the proposed changes to the school's IT policy. Refreshments will be provided. Please call me on extension 2574 if you are unable to attend.

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of previous meeting
4. Matters arising
5. Proposed changes to the school's IT policy
6. Any other business
7. Date and time of next meeting

Joshua Brinks
Council Secretary

Section II – Optional Questions

Candidates were required to attempt any three of four questions in this section.

Question 4

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- attributes that a clerk in the human resource management office should possess
- the main difference between a job description and a job specification
- factors to be taken into account before choosing a supplier when purchasing goods and services
- how to complete a purchase order form, which was provided, to show the amount paid for the order.

For Part (a), candidates were asked to identify two attributes that a clerk in the human resource management office should possess. It was worth two marks.

This part of the question was answered well by most candidates who gave correct responses which included the following:

- Tact/diplomacy/courtesy/respect/good manners/being polite
- Confidentiality/trustworthy
- Patience/tolerance

- Initiative/willingness
- Integrity/honesty
- Deportment/self-esteem/being meticulous
- Regularity/punctuality

In Part (b), candidates were required to explain the *main* difference between the job description and the job specification. It was worth two marks.

Most candidates could explain what a job description is but many had a challenge explaining the job specification. Some candidates used the words in the stem of the question to explain the meaning, for example, 'a job description *describes* the job', whereas 'a job specification *specifies* the job'. For the most part, candidates gave the correct response for a job description as *a document which lists the duties and tasks that must be done in a job and provides an overview by outlining key features such as title, summary, main duties and terms of employment*. The more able candidates were also able to give the correct response for a job specification as *a document which outlines the human characteristics or attributes needed to successfully complete the duties for the position such as skills, attitudes, abilities and experience*.

For Part (c), candidates were to state two factors that a firm should take into consideration before choosing a supplier for goods and services. It was worth two marks. Generally, candidates performed well on this part of the question by supplying correct responses which included the following:

- Cost/price
- Urgency/timely delivery/location/supplier's capability
- Incentives/discounts offered/credit purchases allowed
- Availability of goods
- Quality of goods/good reviews/background check

For Part (d), candidates were given the following information:

On 30 December 2016, the Sure-Fix Electrical Co. Ltd of 101 Andrew Avenue, Chaguanas, Trinidad, Tele. 868-688-2594, placed order number 259 for A-1 Electronics Co. Ltd. of 15 Main Street, Santa Cruz, Trinidad, to supply as follows:

10 electric stoves @ \$2500 each
 6 washing machines @ \$3000 each
 12 flat screen television sets @ \$5000 each
 A trade discount of 12 ½ % is allowed.

Candidates were required to complete the purchase order form, which was provided, to show the amount paid for the order and to show all calculations.

This part of the question, which was worth nine marks, was satisfactorily done by most candidates who supplied correct responses for the following:

- Name/address of supplier
- Date and order number
- Accurate information under the four columns from Quantity to Total Price
- The total for all three items
- Trade discount of \$12 875
- Grand total after trade discount is deducted of \$90 125

Question 5

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- the advantages of using e-commerce to procure goods and services
- reasons why it is important to manage the stock of all items in an organization
- reasons why firms would utilize television or radio, as against the print media for advertising their products
- how to use information given to prepare a quotation.

For Part (a), candidates were to state two advantages of using e-commerce to procure goods and services.

This part of the question, which was worth two marks, was satisfactorily done as most candidates gave correct responses which included the following:

- Goods being bought can be seen/described in display pictures/advertisements.
- One can choose from a wider variety of suppliers for quality of goods/services, each with its own website.
- Lower cost as suppliers do not have large premises which incur additional expenses to display their stock /reduces human interactions and paperwork/elimination of middlemen.
- Quick contact can be made to suppliers around the world/internationally through email to obtain quotations, place orders, request rapid delivery and make payment
- Time is saved as customers do not have to leave their offices or homes to do their shopping/increased customer base.
- Purchases can be made 24/7 with delivery made based on availability of products.

Part (b) required candidates to give two reasons for the importance of managing the stock of all items in an organization. It was worth two marks.

Generally, this part of the question was done well by candidates who gave correct responses as follows:

- Prevention of pilferage/theft
- Control of inventory/prevent shortage/overstock/wastage
- Signalling of market trends/needs/performance
- Monitoring availability of capital/to determine if company is making a profit or loss
- To have just-in-time supplies that a business needs, for example, perishable/expired goods
- Optimizing storage space

Part (c) presented candidates with the following information: *One of the main functions of the marketing office is to advertise the company's goods and services using a variety of sources, for example, television or radio.*

Candidates were to suggest two reasons why firms would utilize television or radio, as against the print media for advertising their products. This part of the question was worth two marks.

For the most part, candidates were able to give at least one correct reason firms use television or radio to advertise its products which included the following

- Reach a large number of persons at the same time/popular
- Use techniques to appeal to the buyer such as music, pictures/visuals and endorsements from famous persons
- Effective in attracting wide listenership/attention or choice of time
- Appeal to prospective customers, whether literate or not, to buy products

Part (d) presents the following information:

A seller, JenOMic Office Supplies and Equipment Ltd of 50 Main Street, San Fernando, Trinidad, and telephone 869-639-3400, sent a quotation #199 to ShaMac's Office Services, 20 Central Avenue, Gasparillo South, Trinidad with telephone, 868-688-8500, dated 30 December 2016 and thanking them for the opportunity to quote the following:

2 high-speed photocopiers OJM123 @ \$10 500 each

5 ergonomic office chairs @ \$1050 each

Terms of sale: Delivered by company's delivery van within two days

Sales tax of 15% is applied to all products.

The goods can be taken from the warehouse.

This offer is valid for one month.

We will be happy to deliver your order.

Jack O'Brian, Sales Officer.

Candidates were to use the information given to prepare the quotation form that was provided.

This part of the question, which was worth nine marks, was done well by most candidates who attempted it. They placed the two addresses in their correct positions for both the seller and the prospective buyer; the correct quotation number and date were given, as well as the correct information under headings from Quantity to Amount; the sub-total of \$26 250 was correctly calculated; however, some candidates failed to calculate the sales tax of 15 per cent which was \$3937.50 and this affected the accuracy of the grand total which was \$30 187.50. The relevant information under the Remarks section, the closing sentence, the name and position of officer were appropriately presented.

Question 6

This question tested candidates' ability to

- list three functions the procurement office must perform when goods arrive
- list three duties the dispatch clerk must perform to ensure that stationery requirements are met
- calculate the total for full payment if a customer settles his account by a specified date
- discuss ways in which the corporate communications clerk's functions of *promoting corporate image*, *producing a company newsletter* and *upkeeping of the company's website* can contribute to attracting new and reclaiming previous customers.

For Part (a), candidates were presented with the following information: *The procurement office is responsible for stock control which also involves overseeing goods inwards*. They were required to list three functions the procurement office must perform when the goods arrive. This part was worth three marks.

For the most part, candidates could only list either one or two functions that the procurement office must perform when goods arrive and these included the following:

- Check goods received against delivery notes and purchase orders.
- Check packaging for apparent damage/expiry date/state of goods.
- Give a receipt or signature to the carrier.
- Pass goods into the warehouse or some other part/section/department of the organization.
- Check invoices received from suppliers, for example, the price, quantity, address.
- Ensure the warehouse stores goods in suitable and secure conditions.

Part (b) asked candidates to list three duties the dispatch clerk must perform to ensure that statutory requirements are met. It was worth three marks.

Generally, this part of the question was done unsatisfactorily as candidates overlooked the term *statutory requirements* and gave instead the regular duties of the dispatch clerk.

The following expected responses were not presented by almost all the candidates:

- Make special arrangements for hazardous freight.
- Ensure health and safety precautions are observed in the office/stockroom.
- Prepare and distribute lists/brochures of safety procedures.
- Report any breaches of health and safety practices/hazardous situations.

For Part (c), candidates were given the following information: *The cash discount terms offered by Caribbean Traders are 4% 7 days, 2% 21 days, otherwise net. Customer Alan Blackwood made purchases totalling \$1050 on 5 April 2017. He must also pay a delivery charge of \$75.*

Candidates were required to calculate the total payment if customer Alan Blackwood settles his account on 10 April.

This part of the question, which was worth three marks, was done satisfactorily by those candidates who attempted it. They selected the correct discount of 4% based on the payment date and calculated correctly the discount which is \$42; they added the delivery charge of \$75 and computed the correct total of \$1083.

For Part (d), the following information was given: *In 2016, Caribbean Traders lost some of its customers because of poor communication with the public.*

Candidates were to briefly discuss one way in which each of the following functions of the corporate communications clerk may contribute to attracting new customers and reclaiming previous customers:

- Promoting corporate image
- Producing a company newsletter
- Upkeep of the company's website

Part (d) was worth six marks. For the most part, candidates earned full marks for *producing a company newsletter* and *upkeep of the company's website*. Most candidates, however, failed to give the correct responses for *promoting corporate image* which includes the following:

- Improves/maintains communication with customers seeking to rebrand/reassure them of the quality and reliability of products and services, which in turn encourages their loyalty and helps the company to become more competitive.

Many candidates gave the correct responses for *producing a company newsletter* which included the following:

- Contact/communication with customers while advertising and sharing important news about the company, employees, products/services, keeping them aware of special prices, discounts, coupons or vouchers and introducing new products/services

For *upkeep of the company's website*, candidates gave correct responses which included the following:

- Enables the organization to reach a wider range of prospective customers providing them with up-to-date details and pictures of products, promotions/discounts and services; 24-hour information/communication/messages/comments and the convenience of online purchasing

Question 7

This question tested candidates' understanding of

- skills required of a clerk in the sales office
- the reasons why the despatch office must collaborate with the sales office
- how to complete an invoice using information given on a message form.

In Part (a), candidates were required to identify three skills that are required of a clerk in the sales office. This part was worth three marks.

Generally, candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question, giving correct responses such as the following:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Filing/organizing records
- Data entry
- Basic information technology/word processing
- Proficiency in the use of productivity tools
- Competence in the use of organizational tools/time management
- Communication skills

Part (b) required candidates to outline three reasons why the dispatch office should collaborate with the sales office. It was worth three marks.

This part of the question was done satisfactorily by many candidates who gave at least one or two correct responses which included the following:

- Make available items needed to fill customers' orders/lists/information.
- Ensure timely scheduling of deliveries and pick-ups.
- Provide any special packaging/delivery required/keep customers satisfied.
- Pack orders/goods to be delivered to the consignee.
- Estimate volume of orders being obtained/avoid low stock levels.
- Estimate/provide storage space required.
- Estimate/provide volume of labour required.
- Advise on promises which can be made to the customer.
- Ensure promises made are fulfilled.

For Part (c), the following information was given to candidates:

Ms Sandra Ballantyne, the sales office clerk at Stationery Selections Unlimited, recorded an order received by telephone from customer RT Agencies on the telephone message form shown below. She immediately began to prepare an Invoice #1364, VAT Reg No. 33901 but was unexpectedly called away to deal with another matter.

TELEPHONE MESSAGE

FOR: Sales Manager/Department

CALLER INFORMATION:

Mr ☒ Mrs ☐ Ravi Thani

Company R T Agencies, PO Box 156, Calder, St Vincent

Called for you	☒	Please call	☒
Returned your call	☐	Will call back	☐
Needs to see you	☐	Sent an email	☐
Sent a fax	☐	Left a message (below)	☒

Message: Would like to order 3 HP Officejet Pro laser colour printers @ \$390.00 each; 200 reams Chamex 8½ x11 in copying paper @ \$12.75 each, 150 Carib Isle 100-page duplicate delivery notebooks @ \$15.25; 2 Fujitsu fi-7160 scanners @ \$2187.00

Date: 11 May 2017

Time: 2:04 p.m.

Signed: Sandra Ballantyne

Candidates were required to complete the invoice provided for Stationery Selections Unlimited, using the information given on the message form. This was worth nine marks.

Many candidates who attempted this part of the question performed unsatisfactorily as they failed to give the correct responses in full which included the following:

- Insertion of the correct VAT number
- Insertion of the correct date
- Insertion of the correct name and address
- Correct calculation of total price for 150 notebooks (\$2287.50)
- Completion of the correct information for the second item: (Chamex 8 ½ x 11 in 75 g copying paper)
- Correct calculation of the subtotal of \$10 381.50
- Correct calculation of 15.5 % VAT, \$1609.13
- Correct final total of \$11 990.63
- Approval by sales manager

Paper 032 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment

A case was provided and candidates were required to read and respond to seven structured questions, with Questions 1, 2, 5 and 7 divided into subparts (a) and (b). This paper was worth 50 marks.

Candidates were required to apply analytical and evaluative skills to respond appropriately to questions asked. In addition to the case, candidates were given several short scenarios from which they were to respond appropriately, applying market research techniques.

A short case which was developed from Section IX explored the area on Accounts and Financial Services (AFS). It was entitled *Figure it Out*. It read:

Since earning a BSc Degree in Social Work in 2015, you have been in search of a job, but find it really challenging to get a position in that field. Your friend Sabrina Howell introduces you to her uncle, Kadeem Singh, owner of a successful construction business in Grenada, Spice Isle Structures. He is currently seeking to recruit a trainee accounts clerk. The three of you chat for a while and when Sabrina mentions that you are job hunting, Mr Singh offers you the position subject to a period of probation and training. You are badly in need of a job, and being a person who enjoys a challenge and loves learning new skills, you accept the offer from Mr Singh.

On 1 March 2016, after a three-month probation and training period, you must perform a number of tasks as part of Mr Singh's assessment of your competence and fitness for permanent employment. As accounts clerk, you are placed under the supervision of the accountant, Maria Marville, who will report on your progress to Mr Singh, once you have completed the assigned tasks. It is your intention to prove yourself by not just completing the tasks assigned, but also by identifying and making recommendations to correct any inefficiencies you encounter.

Marks ranged from zero to 34. The mean score was 12.48.

Question 1

In Part (a), candidates were informed that their first assessment requires them to take responsibility for the petty cash. They were required to complete the Petty Cash Book provided for the month of March. They were to examine the petty cash entries and make the necessary corrections to restore the imprest amount of \$100.00 at 1 April. This part was worth seven marks.

PETTY CASH BOOK

Cash Received	Date	Details	Voucher No.	Totals	Travel	Stationery	Postage	Cleaning	Sundries
	2016								
100.00	1 March	Cash							
	4	First Aid Equipment	9	7.50					12.50
	7	Taxi fare	10	35.00	35.00				
	11	Soft drinks	11	2.50					
	14	A4 paper	12	12.00		12.00			
		Coffee	13	8.75					
		Window cleaning	14	23.50			23.50		
		Stamps	15	10.00			10.00		
		Bal c/d							
<u>100.00</u>				<u>100.00</u>					
	1 April	April b/d							
		Cash							

Many candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this question as they failed to

- change First Aid Equipment in the Sundries column from \$12.50 to \$7.50
- extend both soft drinks, \$2.50 and coffee, \$8.75, to the Sundries column
- place window cleaning, \$23.50, in the Cleaning column
- show the amount of \$99.25 in the Totals column (below Stamps column)
- correctly place balance c/d and April b/d in the relevant locations
- correctly insert cash received at 1 April (\$99.25).

For Part (b), candidates were given the following information: *Ms Marville asks you to assess the current petty cash process.* They were to describe two measures that could be taken to prevent theft. This was worth two marks.

Generally, candidates performed well on this part of the question, giving correct responses which include the following:

- Check sums of money carefully before handing them to anyone to prevent any discrepancies.
- Lock the cash in a cash box and place the box in a locked safe so no one has unauthorized access.
- Store the key to the cash box/container/safe in a secure place which is only accessible by the petty cashier and supervisor, to prevent unauthorized access.
- Never leave the box unattended as this may provide an opportunity for theft.
- Always make sure every payment of cash is supported by an authorized voucher so there is proof/justification for/explanation of how money was spent.

- Ensure vouchers received, plus the cash, equal the imprest amount as this will help keep track of cash spent and identify any discrepancies.
- Use a combination lock to secure the petty cash box and prevent access by unauthorized persons.
- Limit the number of persons with access to the petty cash to reduce the chance of theft.
- Perform a periodic reconciliation to prevent inaccuracy/reduce the chance of errors/mistakes.
- The petty cashier should not be the one performing the reconciliation in order to prevent theft/dishonesty/avoid overlooking mistakes.

Question 2

In Part (a), candidates were asked to complete the following cheque for \$650 to be paid to Justin Hamilton of Clean Sweep Services, the industrial cleaning agency, for Mr Singh's signature. This was worth three marks.

Caricom Regional Bank Speightstown St Peter	01232
Date:	
Pay to the order of	
.....\$.	
.....	
Spice Isle Structures St Georges Grenada.....	
23 086 0000000001	

Many candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this part as they failed to insert the correct date as stated in the case. Also, the payee's name was written in the wrong place, and the amount in words and figures was placed incorrectly.

For Part (b), candidates were presented with the following information: *Having done as Mr Singh requested, you determined that a crossed cheque would have been a more secure method of payment*'. They were to provide two considerations for the decision to use a crossed cheque as a secure method of payment to the customer. This part was worth four marks.

For the most part, candidates could only provide one consideration for the decision to use a crossed cheque as a secure method of payment to the customer. The correct responses given included the following:

- Since the cheque must be deposited into a bank account, if it is stolen, it can be traced by locating the account into which it was paid.
- It cannot be exchanged for cash/transferred to another person, so this acts as a deterrent to theft.
- When the cheque is paid into the bank the funds cannot be accessed until the cheque has cleared/three to five working days, few dishonest persons would want to risk this wait.

Question 3

Candidates were instructed to use the information provided below to prepare a bank reconciliation statement as at 30 April 2016. This was worth eight marks.

Balance as per bank statement 30 April 2016	\$9328.30
Unpresented cheques:	
Cheque no. 654	\$44.50
Cheque no. 902	\$313.00
Deposits not yet recorded by the bank:	
April 29	\$1057.00
April 29	\$35.50
Bank charges	\$18.00

Most candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this question as they appeared to be unsure of how to complete the calculations, such as what to add and what to subtract. The few candidates who attempted the question only managed to score one half of the marks awarded.

Question 4

Candidates were presented with the following information:

At a meeting of the accounts staff, Ms Marville expressed concern about the increasing number of credit customers or delinquent debtors currently defaulting on their monthly payments. You have been assigned to work for a period of time with the credit controller in seeking to improve this situation.

Candidates were to recommend four measures the company could implement to improve efficiency in debt collection. This was worth four marks.

Generally, candidates performed well on this question, giving correct responses which included the following:

- Offer discounts for prompt/early payment.
- Ensure prompt issuing of invoices and statements.
- Examine customer accounts periodically to ensure payments are up to date; maintain

accurate up-to-date information/records.

- Ensure orders do not exceed assigned credit limit.
- Periodically reassess accounts to adjust credit limit up or down accordingly.
- If payments are outstanding, return any orders made with a request for payment or adjustment of the order.
- Charge interest on overdue accounts.
- Create a list of customers with poor credit and circulate as necessary.
- Send timely notices/reminders requesting payment by established deadline.
- Employ the services of a debt collector or debt chaser at the defaulter's expense.
- Take legal action against persistent defaulters when all other attempts have failed.
- Make allowances for standing orders to have payments made from the customer's account directly into the company's account.
- Perform credit checks before accepting/extending credit to customers/potential customers.

Question 5

In Part (a), candidates were required to complete the pay sheet shown below for the three employees listed and to show all working in calculating the

- Overtime hours and overtime pay for S. Blake
- Gross wage and income tax for W. Hart
- National Insurance and net pay for K. Thomas

This was worth six marks.

PAY SHEET										
Period 8–12 March 2017										
						Deductions				Net Pay
Name of Employee	Number of Hours	Number of Overtime Hours	Basic Pay (40 hours) \$	Overtime \$20/hour	Gross Wages	Income Tax (28%)	National Insurance (8%)	Union Dues	Pensions	
Blake, S.	42		725.00		765.00	214.20	61.20	25.00	85.00	379.60
Hart, W.	44	4	680.00	80.00			60.80	25.00	85.00	376.40
Thomas, K.	38	0	600.00	00.00	600.00	168.00		25.00	85.00	

Question 6

This question stated the following information: *Like most businesses, Spice Isle Structures depends on commercial banks and insurance companies for vital services. The company is seeking funding for additional machinery and equipment and has negotiated an overdraft arrangement with its bank.*

In Part (a), candidates were to recommend three adjustments to be made to its present mode of operations. This was worth six marks.

Generally, candidates performed unsatisfactorily on this part of the question as many of them did not attempt it, and those who did, scored zero or received one or two marks. They failed to give correct responses such as the following:

- Curb other expenses to ensure interest on overdraft is paid on a prompt and timely basis.
- Limit the number of debtors in the business to maintain ready cash flow.
- Ensure debtors pay on time/promptly to ensure that funds are available.
- Find innovative ways to sell old/new stocks to obtain additional finances.
- Do not take additional credit from suppliers/creditors as this will increase expenses.
- Use overdraft facility for priority projects to avoid spending on day-to-day expenditure.
- Do not increase wage bills/practise economy to ensure overdraft limit is not exceeded/can be repaid.
- Create a budget and stick to it to control spending.
- Pay fees and charges promptly to avoid incurring additional expenses/penalties.
- Have an online account to easily track transactions/keep up to date.

For Part (b), candidates were presented with the following information: *Once the new equipment has been purchased, it will become necessary to acquire adequate insurance coverage.* They were to suggest three essential elements in equipment insurance coverage for which the company will seek to have provisions made. This was worth three marks.

This part of the question was done satisfactorily by those candidates who attempted it as they gave correct responses which included the following:

- Cost to repair damaged equipment
- Cost to procure/replace equipment
- Bodily injury and property damage resulting from the use of equipment
- Coverage for loss of equipment caused by theft/burglary/vandalism
- Coverage for man-made or natural disasters, for example, flood, hurricane, fire
- Loss of income resulting from damage or breakdown

Question 7

The following information was given for this question:

Growth and improvement are ongoing goals of Spice Isle Structures, and since the computerization of most accounting processes, there has been great success in financial record-keeping and greater efficiency overall within the company. Two attributes that should be demonstrated by the staff using a technology-driven accounting system are integrity and confidentiality.

Candidates were asked to explain how each of these attributes could enable overall success in the organization. This was worth four marks.

For the most part, candidates were able to earn at least two marks on this question. For *integrity*, candidates gave correct responses which included the following:

- Employees can be trusted to handle sums of money, particularly sensitive information/documents, thereby eliminating illegal/dishonest practices.
- Develops a positive image of the company to maintain customer loyalty.
- Creates and maintains an atmosphere of trust to put the company in a favourable position/reputation/enhance employee relationships.
- Attributes exhibited such as honesty, teamwork, loyalty, punctuality and respect for each other make company outstanding/exceptional.
- Maintains consistency and accuracy of data to make company reliable/creditable.

For *confidentiality*, correct responses included the following:

- Privacy is maintained because staff do not disclose sensitive/personal information such as salary and discounts given to customers/customer details.
- Files/documents are not left unattended so that financial/private information can be accessed by unauthorized persons or competitors.
- Financial documents are stored securely/use of passwords to prevent illegal use of sensitive information.
- Prevents costly/time-consuming lawsuits caused by inappropriate disclosure/use of information.

Recommendations

- Candidates need greater practice with the types of questions tested on Paper 032. They need to develop critical and analytical thinking skills in order to answer the application questions which comprise this paper.
- Since most of the candidates who sit this examination are private candidates, upon registration for the examination, they should be advised that they need to be guided by the syllabus, appropriate and relevant texts and support materials.
- Candidates should visit the **CXC** website and read comments presented in the subject

reports in order to assist themselves. Such comments may help them identify their strengths and weaknesses.

- In addition, they need to pay keen attention to the key concepts as set out in the revised Office Administration syllabus. They should pay attention to the following content areas:
 - Why firms would use a risograph and a shredder
 - Attributes/attitudes/skills that clerks in the different offices should possess
 - Breach of confidentiality
 - Composition of greetings for automated answering machines
 - Mail handling machines such as collating and sealing, and their functions
 - Steps to follow when doing a mail merge
 - Composition of letters, paying attention to the different parts that comprise the letter, for example, inside and return addresses, placement of current date, use of matching salutation and complimentary close
 - Ways to promote a positive image of a firm
 - How to write a combined notice of meeting and agenda
 - Main difference between a job description and a job specification
 - Special attention to be paid to completing business forms such as quotation, invoice, order
 - Functions of the different offices, why they liaise with each other and duties of the clerks in these offices.

Most of these concepts/topics comprise the areas of concern in which performance was poor.

- In responding to questions, candidates should also note keywords *identify, describe, state, suggest, differentiate, write, compose, give reasons, discuss* and the number of marks allotted to each part of the question, to guide them in presenting information in a logical and organized manner.
- Private candidates should also consider seeking assistance from experienced teachers in the school system to guide them in answering questions and managing their time.