

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS IN MALAWI

DECEMBER 2014 EXAMINATIONS

ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN PROGRAMME

PAPER TC2: COMMUNICATION

EXAMINER'S REPORT

GENERAL COMMENTS

This examination paper was of the same level of difficulty as that of the previous examination papers. The only difference was that whereas previously the paper had seven questions from which the candidates were supposed to answer five questions of 20 marks each, this one had six and the candidates were supposed to answer four questions of 25 marks each. There were questions requiring candidates to recall information, questions requiring analysis, and there were a number of questions requiring application.

The performance on the paper was not very different from that of the previous years. Although almost 50% of the candidates passed the examination, their scores were generally barely satisfactory – that is between 50% and 59%. Very few scored in the 60s and 70s. As always, language problems negatively affected the performance, especially where portions of marks were specifically allocated to language.

COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

Question 1 (a)

This question required the candidates to explain the importance of communication for effective operations in organizations. The answers were not satisfactory. Some candidates merely defined the concept of ‘communication’ without applying it to organizations, while others merely listed points on the importance of communication. Very few candidates answered this part of the question satisfactorily.

Question 1(b)

The question was on network patterns of communication and how they are used in organizations. Some candidates confused “the wheel” with “the circles”.

However, a good number were able to draw the network patterns while others merely explained the concepts without applying them to organization. Many candidates failed to explain how the patterns work. This could be an indication that the candidates were not taught this topic.

Question 1 (c)

The question, on vertical communication, required the candidates to explain the measures that can be taken to improve upward communication. The answers were, generally, satisfactorily.

QUESTION 2

This was the most popular question in this examination paper with almost all the candidates attempting it and the performance was generally good.

Question 2(a)

This question required the candidates to state the things that participants can do in a meeting to make it successful. The performance on it was average. Some candidates included things that participants could do outside the meeting, such as contributing to agenda items. However, in general, the answers were sensible.

Question 2(b)

The question provided a case from which the candidates were required to write a memo presenting both good news and bad news. A hint was given requiring them to rearrange the points and develop an order that would make the memo effective. Business communication requires that when there is good and bad news to be communicated, the presenter needs to start with the bad news and finish with the good news since communication needs to end on a positive note. However, despite the fact that this manner of breaking news is covered in the syllabus, most of the candidates failed to rearrange these points and ended up writing the points in the order they were presented. This made most of the candidates lose marks on this question.

Question 2(c)

The question was on barriers to communication. The candidates were given a list of barriers to explain how they can be overcome. Most candidates had problems with meaning of stereotyping and stage fright and ended up guessing answers.

QUESTION 3

This was one of the least popular questions and the performance on it was below average.

Question 3(a)

Almost all the candidates misunderstood this question. Hardly anyone got any marks here. The examiners had to reduce the marks from twelve (12) to eight (8). The question asked the candidates to identify four common facilities in desk telephones which assist in making communication effective. There were all sorts of wild guesses. Needless to say, the explanations of their importance were wrong too.

Question 3(b)

This part of the question asked the candidates to state the benefits of delivering messages through telephones rather than delivering them face to face. For a good number of the candidates this was another challenge as their responses were pegged to the benefits of oral communication in general. In addition, some candidates had problems using the language of contrasting two media of communication. In the end the suggested answer had to be adjusted to accept the benefits of oral communication, in general.

Question 3(c)

This question asked for an explanation of the statement that one needs to be prepared before making a telephone call. The significance of the preparation was not explained. Instead the candidates first talked about how the caller should prepare when making a call without showing the justification for the preparation. Some candidates merely listed the different ways of preparing for telephone calls.

QUESTION 4

This was the least popular question on the examination paper with barely half the candidates answering it. This showed that candidates avoid answering questions that require creativity and writing in prose. They prefer recall questions – memory. However, the few candidates who answered it, scored good marks.

Question 4(a)

Candidates were required to write a speech accepting the best employee award. A skeleton of points was provided on which to base the speech. The candidates demonstrated an understanding of speech-making. They showed that they understood the requirements of spoken language as opposed to the very formal written language. The salutation and the skeleton points were generally sensibly expanded.

Question 4(b)

This question asked for five things required in preparing a speech. The question was fairly well answered except that the answers were mostly in incorrect English.

QUESTION 5

This was one of the popular questions but the performance on it was mixed. There were candidates who scored good marks and those who scored poorly.

Question 5(a)

Was on factors to consider when writing a notice that would attract the reader's attention. The question was generally misunderstood. There were many wild guesses, sometimes even including all the 7Cs. Needless to say, very few candidates got any marks on it.

Question 5(b)

Was on non-verbal communication. It required the candidates to suggest messages being conveyed by specific non-verbal communication cues. The answers were supposed to include relevant examples. The greatest challenges were, "time management" and "logos" which were generally just defined, sometimes correctly and other times incorrectly. Examiners got the impression that some candidates attempted questions without first analyzing their requirements. They start answering the questions without giving them enough thought.

Question 5(c)

Candidates were given sentences which were grammatically wrong. They were required to re-write them in correct English. Generally, the performance was satisfactory even though a good number of candidates made the sentences worse and changed their meaning as well as the structure.

QUESTION 6

This was another popular question, although barely half of those who attempted it scored good marks. The question was on popular interview questions.

Question 6(a)

Asked the candidates to talk about themselves. A majority wrote longish boring accounts of themselves and families and attached a sentence or two to explain their qualifications or experience.

Question 6(b)

The candidates were asked to explain why they had applied to Nasolo Industries. Some answers were quite mature but most displayed immaturity. For example, some candidates stated that they were running away from their previous employers who were involved in cashgate – so they did not want to be arrested etc.

Question 6(c)

Candidates were asked to explain their weaknesses. Many interpreted this to mean poor health rather than professional weakness.

Question 6(d)

Asked the candidates the salary they expected to be offered. A good number mentioned huge figures and were very undiplomatic in their answers which revealed their greed.

Question 6(e)

Asked the candidates for the questions they had or comments. Some asked fairly sensible questions but a majority asked about information which they should have investigated before coming for the interviews.

CONCLUSION

Candidates avoided application questions. When studying, they do not seem to go beyond memorization of information. Also the language is still poor and this fact negatively affects their performance. Most ignore key words in questions hence some answers become irrelevant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Candidates should be trained to apply information to their organizations.
2. Candidates should be encouraged to read widely to improve language. Employers expect their employees to write reports, describe situations in correct English.
3. Candidates should be trained to recognize the key words in questions.

