

**STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

**INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS IN MALAWI**

**JUNE 2014 EXAMINATIONS**

**ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN PROGRAMME**

**PAPER TC2: COMMUNICATION**

**EXAMINER'S REPORT**

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

The paper adequately addressed topics in the syllabus. It had both recall and application questions. The level of difficulty was appropriately discriminating. The candidates scored high marks in recall questions but low marks in application questions. In some cases, it was clear that the candidates did not have the facts to answer a particular question as they gave answers which appeared guess work. It also came out that some candidates attempted a question where they had answers for just one section and then used wrong guesses to answer the other section. Those who failed showed that they were ill prepared for the examination.

The general problem was in grammar and spellings. For some reason, a good number of candidates replaced the letter "n" with "m" as in "imformation", "comfution", "comflict", etc. Some candidates used abbreviated spelling such as "bt", "u", "info", and others. Many still used contractions "don't", "can't", etc.

Some candidates wrote their examination numbers where they should have written their question numbers, on top of each page. Some candidates answered two questions on the same page despite instructions stating clearly that they should begin a question on a fresh page. This caused some confusion when adding marks of a question.

In spite of the weakness pointed above, the general performance was satisfactory with 62.3% of the candidates passing the examination.

**COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS**

**QUESTION 1**

The question was the most popular in the paper and most candidates scored high marks.

Part (a) required the candidates to describe the communication process with the aid of a diagram. Most of the diagrams drawn were incomplete and they presented the process as if it ends with the receiver. The real challenge in this part was on the verbal description. There were many grammar and spelling mistakes. Many candidates misspelt elements like "encording", "decording", "chanel", etc. some

candidates failed to label the diagrams correctly as they confused meanings of encoding and decoding. One other common problem was where candidates merely defined the elements in isolation without really describing the process as was expected. Few candidates also drew the diagram and left out the description. However, being factual and coming from the first topic of their syllabus, many candidates found it easy and got good marks from it.

Part (b) required the candidates to give the barriers to communication that may be caused by the sender and the receiver. The answers showed that the candidates had the right content on the barriers to communication even though there was evidence that some were merely regurgitating concepts.

## **QUESTION 2**

The question combined elements of non-verbal communication and business letter writing. The objective of the question was to test if candidates could apply their knowledge of non-verbal communication to a given situation. The performance in this question was average. Most candidates who attempted this question clearly opted it after being attracted by the business letter and that is where a good number of them got marks.

Part (a) required the candidates to state ways in which non-verbal communication can be used in a business letter. Many candidates did not have a clue to the meaning of the question and the result was that they ended up giving guess answers.

Part (b) was a letter to be written to PAEC about the poor performance by candidates in the PAEC examinations and suggestions of how the performance could be improved. Many candidates were familiar with the scenario and gave good points. The challenge in this part was their failure to present information in a formal, logical, and grammatical way.

## **QUESTION 3**

The question on meetings and small group communication was fairly popular among the candidates.

Part (a) of the question required the candidates to recall the general responsibilities of chairpersons, secretaries and participants in connection to meetings. Most candidates found this task easy. The only challenge was to come up with the duties of the participants. In a few isolated cases, candidates interchanged duties of secretaries with those of chairpersons.

Part (b) of the question was on advantages and disadvantages of working in groups. The answers were average with some candidates giving good answers and others failing to express their points clearly.

Part (c) of the question built on the candidates' knowledge of different types of minutes and required them to give general factors that would help secretaries to determine the type of minutes to be written in a meeting. Many candidates clearly

lacked knowledge of the different types of minutes let alone the reasons why a secretary would choose a particular type of minutes. Very few candidates were able to explain the conditions correctly.

#### **QUESTION 4**

The question tested the candidates' knowledge of interview skills in face to face and telephone situations.

Part (a) asked for qualities of good interviewers in a face to face interview. Some candidates misunderstood the question and instead of giving the qualities of good interviewers they gave duties of the interviewers.

Part (b) required the candidates to explain the telephone skills they would use to make a telephone interview effective. Most candidates ignored the root of the question and regarded part (b) as independent. The result was that the answers were general in nature and not directly linked to the expectations of the examiners.

#### **QUESTION 5**

The question was on aspects of oral communication. The general performance was average.

Part (a) was on speech communication. Candidates were expected to explain techniques that would help make a speech presentation persuasive. Most of the answers provided general factors relating to presentations. It was evident that the candidates saw no difference between informative speaking and persuasive speaking. The guess answers given here gave an impression that this was one area that might not have been covered adequately in class.

Part (b) required the candidates to write a memo asking for visual aid resources and explaining the importance of the visual aid resources they were asking for. This being a popular topic in communication, it attracted many candidates. The layout of most of the memos was correct. However, some candidates presented the content poorly in terms of structure and formality of approach. They succeeded in asking for visual aid resources but failed to state why they needed them.

#### **QUESTION 6**

The question dealt with three different topics, viz: Maslow's hierarchy of needs, designing telephone message forms, and the importance of bulletins in organisations. It was the least popular question and the performance was just average.

Part (a) required the candidates to explain Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory with the aid of a diagram. Some candidates drew the diagram but failed to give an explanation of the theory. Some diagrams were wrongly labelled and yet others gave a wrong hierarchy. These demonstrated lack of knowledge of the theory itself.

Part (b) required the candidates to design a telephone message form. Most candidates provided correct elements of the form but failed to provide a sensible design.

Part (c) required the candidates to explain the importance of bulletins to organisations. The areas covered in this question are rarely covered in PAEC examinations and might have caught candidates by surprise. This is the reason the question was least attempted. The performance in this question was average.

## **QUESTION 7**

The question covered areas of problem solving and styles of leadership based on a given case study.

Part (a) required the candidates to explain six steps of solving a problem in relation to a given case study. Unfortunately, a majority of the candidates ignored the scenario and just regurgitated the steps. In a number of cases, even the steps presented by the candidates did not make sense as a process. This made them lose out on the full marks allocated.

Part (b) required the candidates to explain how democratic and autocratic leadership styles help or hinder problem solving in an organisation. The question was building on their knowledge of types of leadership. Most candidates ended up listing advantages and disadvantages of the different types of leadership instead of explaining how those leadership styles can help or hinder problem solving. Overall the performance was average.

## **CONCLUSION**

Most candidates performed well in popular topics like letter writing, memo writing, communication theory, and others. The performance was good in questions that required recall of knowledge and comprehension. However, it has been observed that candidates had challenges in areas where application and other higher skills were required. Other challenges came from areas of the syllabus that are not frequently examined. This was evident in areas like bulletins, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, problem solving techniques.

