

**STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

**THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS IN MALAWI**

**JUNE 2015 EXAMINATIONS**

**ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN PROGRAMME**

**PAPER TC2: COMMUNICATION**

**EXAMINER'S REPORT**

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

The paper contained six questions and the candidates were required to choose any four questions. All the questions in the paper were based on the syllabus and were of the appropriate level. The answers given by most candidates revealed lack of preparation as evidenced by the number of cases where guesswork answers were given. There was also a considerable number of candidates who displayed serious errors in spellings and grammar. Of much concern to the examiners were cases where candidates did not number the sub questions they had answered. This left the examiners to decide where one sub question stopped and where the next one started.

**COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS**

**QUESTION 1**

The question was on Communication theory.

- a) The question required the candidates to explain an expression that "communication is cyclic". This is a question that required the candidates to explain how communication works. The examiner's expectation went beyond simply reproducing the memorized definition of communication but also applying the nature of communication to the answer which most of the candidates did not eloquently do.
- b) The question asked the candidates to explain any two barriers to each of the given stages of communication. It was noted that the candidates simply gave the

barriers without necessarily 'explaining' them as the question had asked..Furthermore, it was also noted that spellings of words like 'message' continue to be a problem as most candidates still spell it as 'massage'.

- c) The question gave the candidates the PASS and 7C's principles of business communication and asked them to explain how knowledge of these principles can help overcome barriers to communication. Candidates were supposed to state what the principles are and then answer the question. Some of the answers given gave the impression that the candidates did not know what the principles are all about.

## **QUESTION 2**

The candidates were given a scenario relating to interviews and they were expected to answer the questions by relating the answers to the scenario.

- a) The question required the candidates to explain three ways in which one can prepare for an interview. Most candidates ended up mentioning the ways, instead of explaining them. Candidates need to understand that explaining a concept is different from simply mentioning it. Nevertheless the ways were correct, but could not get full marks
- b) The question required the candidates to write an application letter. The aim of the question was to assess the candidates' ability to write an application letter responding to a given scenario, while giving proper content layout and structure. Most candidates had good information to be used in answering the question. However, there were still several candidates who failed to write a letter having an introduction, body and conclusion. Some resorted to listing subjects passed on MSCE and Diploma results thereby making the letter very long. The relationship between salutation and complimentary close still remains a thorny issue to some of the candidates. In addition to these, some candidates seem not to know where to put the signature in relation to the name of the writer.

- c) The question asked the candidates to explain any five non-verbal elements that would help make a candidate succeed in an interview. Few candidates answered this question satisfactorily, but many resorted to simply outlining points which did not make sense. For example, points like: dressing, eye contact, smiling, etc. There was need to explain points to make sense.

### **QUESTION 3**

This question was on report writing and was not popular.

- a) The question asked the candidates to explain the difference between a short formal report and a short informal report, and to give examples of situations when these reports are used. Few candidates answered this part convincingly. Many who attempted it were lost and gave guess answers.
- b) The question asked the candidates to write notes guiding a friend on how to write a short formal report, paying particular attention to its main parts. The performance on this was average. Those who knew the main parts of a short formal report like introduction, methods, findings, conclusions and recommendations found this part easy and got full marks. However, there is a serious need for candidates to know and understand the different types of reports.

### **QUESTION 4**

The question was on organizational communication and it was popular.

- a) The question asked the candidates to mention five functions of communication in an organization. It simply required the candidates to recall what they had learnt and most of them found this part easy.
- b) The question asked the candidates to explain the difference between formal and informal communication in an organization. Most of the candidates performed poorly on this part. Answers relating to formal written and informal oral were common. This was even compounded by lapses in language and grammar. The

distinction between formal and informal communication is one area where candidates need to improve on

- c) The question asked the candidates to give two advantages and two disadvantages of emails, fax and video conference. Most candidates ended up giving recycled answers which they thought would apply across the board. For instance, they kept repeating answers like: It is fast; It is expensive; It cannot be used in remote areas, etc. Overall, the answers indicated lack of wider knowledge relating to ICT.

### **QUESTION 5**

The question was on meetings.

- a) It required the candidates to define a formal meeting. However, most of them gave guess answers.
- b) The question asked the candidates to give any two functions of documents relating to meetings. The answers given were mostly repeated and revealed an average performance. Very few candidates gave correct answers. This is clearly another area that deserves serious attention from the candidates.
- c) The question gave five terms and concepts relating to meetings. The terms were: matters arising, second, proxy, ex-officio, and call meeting to order. Candidates were required to explain their meanings. The examiner wanted to assess how much the candidates knew about the terms relating to meetings. Most candidates gave guess answers. The overall impression created was that the candidates did not master the topic and tried to recall what had been covered in class but failed to answer correctly.

### **QUESTION 6**

- a) The question provided the candidates with sentences with errors and the candidates were expected to correct the sentences. The answers given reflected

how competent the candidates were, but there were few cases where the candidates made the sentences even worse than the form in which they had been given.

- b) The question gave a topic and asked the candidates to write a paragraph from the given sentence. Some candidates wrote very short paragraphs without much content. Others wrote long paragraphs although the sentence structure was poor. However, there were others who did not even understand what a paragraph is and ended up writing a short essay.
- c) The question provided three styles of leadership and asked the candidates to explain how each one of them affects communication. Most of the answers given revealed that the topic had been covered in class, but they failed to state how leadership styles affect communication. The candidates simply gave the advantages or disadvantages of the different types of leadership without necessarily relating them to communication.

## **CONCLUSION**

Overall, the paper produced a very good performance from the candidates. There are still areas of the syllabus that candidates need to pay attention to. Such topics include report writing and meetings. candidates still need to understand the phrasing of the questions in relation to the marks allocated. The structure of documents like letters, memos and reports needs to be given adequate attention. Likewise, the issues to do with language, expressions and spellings need more attention as these are the areas that are making many candidates not do well in the examination. The pass rate achieved in this exam, to a large extent, truly reflects the language and communication competence of the candidates at the Technician level

