

THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS EXAMINATION COUNCIL OF MALAWI

JUNE 2014 EXAMINATIONS

CERTIFICATE IN FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING

PAPER FA 2: PRACTICAL MATHS AND COMPUTING

EXAMINER'S REPORT

GENERAL COMMENTS

The paper achieved its key aim of enabling candidates to demonstrate what they learnt as it covered all the major sections of the syllabus i.e. Basic Arithmetic, calculations in accounting, simple statistics and computing. There was a computing question in both sections of the paper to ensure that all candidates had a chance to attempt a computing question. As usual the paper had two sections A and B. In section A candidates were required to answer all the three questions and in section B candidates were required to answer three of the four questions.

Although the paper appeared quite fair with simple and clear language, the general performance was poor. The performance evidenced poor preparations on the part of the candidates and incomplete syllabus coverage. Most candidates had difficulties in responding to questions requiring explanations.

COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

Question One

- a) The question required candidates to convert given values into fractions in their simplest form, percentage, correcting them to 2 decimal places, converting them into 3 significant figures and in standard form. Performance for this part was good except for the conversion into three significant figures of 2973490. Most candidates gave 297 as the answer leaving out the zeros.

- b) Candidates were required to differentiate with examples proper and improper fractions. Most candidates scored high marks although some confused the terms and yet others had no idea what the terms meant. Some confused improper fractions with mixed numbers. Others said proper fractions can be simplified while improper fractions cannot.

Question Two

The question was divided into three parts

- a) Required candidates to find the LCM and HCF. The question was fairly done. Some candidates gave the answer in reverse, candidates took it that HCF must be higher than LCM (from the words Highest Common Factor and Lowest Common Multiple). This was a clear indication of the lack of knowledge of the Arithmetic terms.

- b) Simplification of logarithm expressions. Most candidates simplified the expression without problems however some candidates showed lack of knowledge of the laws of logarithm e.g, $\log_{10}60 + \log_{10}2 - \log_{10}12$ they expressed as $\log_{10}60+2-12$ instead of $\log_{10}(60*2)/12$

- c) Candidates were required to write in full acronyms as used in computing. The candidate's performance was fair. Most candidates failed to write in full WIMP, WYSIWYG, COM, and OCR.

Question Three

The question was on number bases where candidates were required to convert a figure from one base to another. The performance was good and most candidates scored all the allocated marks. Few candidates had problems converting the given figures to base 16.

Question Four

The question had two parts. Most candidates attempted this question.

- a) Candidates were required to solve simultaneous equations. Majority of the candidates that attempted this question managed to get the correct answers. However, some candidates in trying to take away the fraction they only multiplied that number to the values on one side of the equation e.g.

$$\frac{4(7-3y) - 6y}{2} = 2 \text{ they could present}$$

$$\text{as } 4(7-3y) - 12y = 2 \text{ instead of}$$
$$4(7-3y) - 12y = 4$$

Some candidates even failed to simplify $+6y - 6y$ giving $-12y$ instead of 0.

- b) Candidates were required to calculate mode, range, mean median and standard deviation for the given number of years workers had been working for a company. The data was given in a table form. This confused majority of candidates who took the first row as x

and second row as y . This was a clear indication of memorizing issues instead of reading and understanding the questions. As a result of this confusion the performance for this part was very poor. As they had wrong $\sum x$, $\sum fx$, $\sum f$ and $\sum fx^2$ consequently wrong answers were presented.

Question Five

This question was based on explanation and consequently majority of the candidates avoided it. The question had three parts.

- a) Required candidates to mention any features of a spreadsheet.
- b) To give the meaning of mode as used in statistics.
- c) To outline four characteristics of mode.

Those candidates that attempted this question only managed to define the term mode which was only worth 2 marks but failed to give characteristics of the mode and correct features of the spreadsheet. Consequently the performance was very poor for this question.

Question Six

This question was popular amongst the candidates.

- a) This part required candidates to rearrange the formula and substitute to solve for the unknown. This part was well done by majority of the candidates. Some candidates had difficulties in handling $\frac{1}{2}$ in $s=ut + \frac{1}{2}at^2$.
- b) Required candidates to calculate the annual rate of compound interest. This part was well done by majority of the candidates although some failed to use the formula correctly others failed to find $6\sqrt{1.5}$
- c) Required candidates to outline stages involved in statistical investigation. This part was poorly performed as majority of candidates had no idea of what was being asked.

Question Seven

This was a popular question and performance was fair.

- a) Candidates were required to calculate the value of a machine after 4 years using straight line method of depreciation and reducing balance. The performance was generally good. Some candidates however, calculated the depreciation and could not subtract it from the original value to find the remaining value (for straight line). Others used $2000000(1+10/100)^4$ instead of $2000000(1-10/100)^4$ for reducing balance.

- b) The question was on probability. This part was poorly done, an indication of lack of knowledge of laws of probability and lack of practice or coverage of the topic.

Conclusion

The general performance was poor. There is an indication of lack of seriousness on part of the candidates or poor preparation for the examination as well as full completion of the syllabus.

Recommendation

- 1) Candidates must be encouraged to start each question on a fresh page to make the work look tidy and easy to read by examiners.
- 2) Candidates must be encouraged to read widely and practice.
- 3) The tuition providers must attempt to cover the whole syllabus.
- 4) The tuition providers must pay attention to the discursive part of the syllabus as well as the computing part.
- 5) Candidates must be encouraged to read the questions carefully before they start answering.
- 6) Candidates should be offered examination tips or techniques (how to make correct choices of questions and how to answer questions)