

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 contains six questions and the candidates are required to attempt any four. All questions in the paper were based on the syllabus and were of the appropriate diploma level. The answers given by many candidates revealed that there were some sections of the syllabus that were not adequately covered by the candidates when they were preparing for examinations. The result is that candidates failed to articulate clearly the issues relating to those areas of the syllabus, hence losing marks.

COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

The question had elements of both written and oral communication.

- (a) It required the candidates to write a memo explaining ways of managing an oral presentation. The following shortfalls were observed:
- Some memos had no headings
 - Some memos erroneously had salutations or complimentary clause
 - Most candidates failed to use proper language, spellings and the general structure of the memos was not conventional.
- (b) The question asked the candidates to explain each of the four styles of speech delivery. Many candidates gave guess answers on memorized and manuscript speeches. Most candidates did not even say anything on impromptu and extemporaneous speeches. This is one example of the areas where many candidates showed lack of knowledge. The area needs attention as the candidates prepare for examinations.

QUESTION 2

The question was on organizational media of communication and written communication.

- (a) The question asked the candidates to state the advantages and disadvantages of different media of organizational communication. Most candidates answered the parts on staff meetings and telephones, but failed to explain clearly the flow diagrams. The answers on the advantages and disadvantages of the flow diagrams revealed that the candidates did not cover adequately, this area of the syllabus.
- (b) The question provided a scenario which required the candidates to write a formal letter. The aim of the question was to assess the candidates' ability to write in formal language and a detailed presentation of a complaint. Most candidates failed to present details of the complaint. They simply used part of the scenario in the question as part of their answer. Most candidates also failed to understand proper complimentary clauses of salutations like "Dear Sir/Madam" and ended up using "Yours sincerely".

QUESTION 3

This question was on problem solving processes.

- (a) It asked the candidates to describe all the stages in the problem solving process. Many candidates evidently seemed unprepared for it. The answers which were given were guesswork, hence, little wonder the question was not attempted by many. There is need for candidates to put in a little attention to this area of the syllabus.
- (b) The question asked the candidates to give seven benefits of resolving conflicts and misunderstandings in an organization. The candidates who attempted this question gave correct answers except that some of the answers were repetitive.

QUESTION 4

The question was on language aspects and non-verbal communication.

- (a) It required the candidates to rewrite sentences correctly. The question tested the areas like sentence parallelism, misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers, and order of qualifying nouns. Very few candidates answered this question correctly.

Candidates need to be well prepared for such items as they form an important part of the syllabus.

- (b) The question asked the candidates to give four functions of non-verbal communication in business. Very few candidates gave correct answers. This is another area of the syllabus in which the candidates were poorly prepared.
- (c) The question asked candidates to explain the usage of given forms of non-verbal communication. The answers were varied as some candidates gave correct, others guessed and yet some gave wrong answers.

QUESTION 5

The question was on barriers to communication and ICT.

- (a) It required the candidates to define a barrier to communication. Most candidates gave correct answers.
- (b) It asked the candidates to explain four given barriers. Many candidates did not understand the difference between stereotyping and negative attitude and ended up using one in the place of the other. Other candidates showed total lack of knowledge. The second part of this question asked about information underload. Most candidates read about information overload and ended up substituting the given question with what they had in their minds. The third part asked the candidates about wrong timing. Most candidates gave guess answers. The last part asked the candidates on inadequate adjustment period. Most candidates did not understand what this term means and ended up giving wrong guess answers.
- (c) The question asked the candidates to explain ways of overcoming the barriers given in part (b) above. The answers varied based on whether or not the candidates knew what the barriers are.
- (d) The question asked the candidates, how ICT has helped in improving communication using examples. Most candidates had knowledge on this except that in some cases they did not give the examples. As a result the answers were lacking in terms of content.

QUESTION 6

The question was on listening skills, visual communication and report writing.

- (a) It asked the candidates to distinguish active from passive listening. The answers varied. Some candidates explained the difference clearly while others struggled to distinguish the two.
- (b) The question asked the candidates to state the ways in which listening could be improved. Most candidates gave correct answers in this part.
- (c) The question provided a scenario and asked the candidates to use the information provided in a table to write a short formal report. Most candidates did not understand the meaning of a short formal report. They ended up writing a memo report and missed out on the marks allocated to layout. This is another area that lecturers need to pay attention to. Information on this topic is readily available in the ICAM study manual for Communication.

CONCLUSION

Overall performance was below average. There are some areas of the syllabus which candidates need to pay attention to i.e. the short formal report writing and problem solving processes. Candidates need to learn 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 also need a lot of attention as these are the areas that are making most candidates fail the examination.

The candidates' lack of preparation in some areas of the syllabus contributed to the poor performance.

