

NCC EDUCATION

INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA
IN
COMPUTER STUDIES

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

3rd DECEMBER 2006

MARKING SCHEME

Markers are advised that many answers in Marking Schemes are **examples only** of what we might expect from candidates. Unless a question **specifically states** that an answer is demanded in a particular form, then an answer that is correct, factually or in practical terms, must be given the available marks.

If there is doubt as to the correctness of an answer the relevant NCC Education textbook should be the first authority.

This Marking Scheme has been prepared as a guide only to markers. This is **ABSOLUTELY NOT** a set of model answers; **NOR** is the Marking Scheme exclusive, for there will frequently be alternative responses which will provide a valid answer.

Notice to Markers

Where markers award half marks in any part of a question they should ensure that the total mark recorded for a question is a whole mark.

QUESTION 1

Marks

Throughout the question, please credit any valid alternative point.

- a) Describe the working relationships in a **matrix structure** AND explain why a company might choose to use this type of organisational structure **5**
- *Makes best use of an organisation's expertise where specialists are seconded to work in another department*
 - *The specialists continue to report on a direct line basis to their own manager but also have an additional functional relationship with the manager of the second department*
 - *This functional relationship is also known as a 'diagonal relationship' as the lines drawn on a diagram to represent this type of structure are diagonal*
 - *Emphasises a project team approach*
 - *Perhaps the most dynamic of structures because it lends itself to fairly rapid change to meet the requirements of new contracts or diversification*
 - *There may be some autonomy in budgeting, marketing and in quality assurance but leaders may be tempted to 'build empires' and be reluctant to have their teams dispersed*
 - *Individual team members may be torn between loyalty to the project team and to their functional superiors*
- Up to 5 marks for description.*
- b) Explain what **plagiarism** is AND how to avoid being accused of plagiarism. **4**
- *Plagiarism is the act of copying ideas (passages of text, etc) from someone else's work and using them as if they were your own*
- One mark for definition.*
- To avoid accusations of plagiarism:*
- *Always record publication details of any information you use in written work so that you acknowledge the inclusion of someone else's work*
 - *Use a consistent style and format of referencing where each reference contains sufficient detail to enable anyone reading your work to find the original source of the information you have used*
 - *Include a bibliography at the end of each piece of work*
 - *Other relevant points*
- Up to 3 marks for explanation.*
- c) Explain why it is important in business writing to use **non-sexist language**. **3**
- *Business writing should reflect the fact that business people are both males and females*
 - *Although masculine pronouns such as 'he' 'him' and 'his' have been used for centuries to refer to both sexes, an engineer or a doctor or a manager or an accountant is not now always a 'he'*
 - *A secretary, nurse or cleaner is not always a 'she'*
 - *Whatever the writer's personal views may be it is important in business to avoid offending anyone*
- Up to 3 marks for explanation.*

d) Briefly describe each of these documents AND explain how each one is used in the recruitment process:

- | | | |
|------|---|----------|
| i) | Job description <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A document that shows the job title and lists the duties, responsibilities and authority of the post and its position within the business.</i> • <i>Job description states exactly what is expected from the eventual occupant of the job and so provides guidance for job applicants.</i> • <i>Also functions to protect both the employer and employee in the event of disagreement or conflict</i> <p><i>One mark for description plus one mark for explanation of use.</i></p> | 2 |
| ii) | Person specification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A document that gives details of essential and desirable attributes, skills and competencies of someone capable of carrying out the duties and responsibilities outlined in the job description</i> • <i>Functions as a checklist for jobseekers to see if s/he has appropriate characteristics/ experience and if it is worth applying</i> • <i>Functions as a checklist for recruiter when selecting and rejecting applications</i> <p><i>One mark for description plus one mark for explanation of use.</i></p> | 2 |
| iii) | Curriculum vitae <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A brief factual outline of personal details, qualifications and working experience</i> • <i>A means for the job applicant to 'sell' him/herself to the employer by selecting and arranging personal information to own specification</i> • <i>Condensed information for employer to enable sifting of applications and short-listing candidates</i> <p><i>One mark for description plus one mark for explanation of use.</i></p> | 2 |
| iv) | Reference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A description of personality and performance in a previous job, usually provided by a former employer or somebody who knows the candidate well</i> • <i>Used by employer to verify candidate's suitability for the job in terms of education and/ or work experience</i> <p><i>One mark for description plus one mark for explanation of use.</i></p> | 2 |

Total 20 Marks

CANDIDATES MUST ATTEMPT FOUR FURTHER QUESTIONS

QUESTION 2**Marks****Throughout the question, please credit any valid alternative point.**

- a) Explain why the face-to-face job interview is such an important part of the recruitment process in spite of the large amounts of information available on application forms, letters and CVs. **10**

- *One point of the exercise is to see if the interviewer and interviewee can get along together*
- *Exchange of information is meant to be of mutual benefit. Both parties should learn from the exchange to enable each one to make decisions about suitability*

Opportunity for the interviewer to assess the candidate in terms of:

- *Self presentation i.e. manners and appearance helps employer decide how well they might or might not fit into the work team*
- *Disposition: is the person acceptable to others? Are they likely to influence others and in what way?*
- *Communication skills; body language*
- *How they deal with stressful situations; are they calm, cheerful, nervous?*
- *Physical characteristics: any health issues of occupational importance*
- *General intelligence*
- *Other valid points*

Up to 10 marks available for a coherent explanation.

- b) What **disadvantages** are there for candidates when job interviews are used for selecting new staff? **5**

- *Artificial situation where success is dependent upon the candidate's performance on the day*
- *Stressful situation where candidates are usually nervous and may not act naturally: the interviewer might not see them at their best*
- *Candidate could be unwell and perform badly that particular day*
- *Interviewer might lack interview technique e.g. fail to ask open questions, or be unprepared/uninformed and fail to bring out the best in the candidate*
- *Interview lets the employer compare people directly as candidates are seen under the same conditions and are asked the same questions*
- *The employer can also see how candidates act when under pressure*

Up to 5 marks for well-described points.

- c) Suggest an alternative way of selecting staff AND describe how it would work. Say whether this might be better or worse than interviews AND briefly explain why. **5**

- *Brief an employment agency with your requirements and let them use the selection procedure of their choice*
- *Recommendations from existing employees or from fellow employers*
- *'Head-hunting'*
- *Use tests such as aptitude tests to help select new employees.*
- *Use group tasks and individual tasks to select employees*
- *Get them to work on a temporary or trial basis so you can get to know them and you can see what they can do*
- *Other valid suggestions*

One mark for suggested method plus up to 2 marks for description – maximum 3 marks.

- *Sensible comments on validity of suggested method and reasoning behind candidate's answer*

Up to 2 marks for coherent comments and reasons.

Total 20 Marks

QUESTION 3

Marks

Throughout the question, please credit any valid alternative point.

- a) **Prompt cards** are used to remind a speaker of the main points of a presentation and also include instructions about equipment, details of slides or handouts. **15**

Prepare a simple presentation on the subject of **applying for a job**. Your answer must be in the form of **FIVE prompt cards**, the first of which should be an introduction.

Each card should include a very brief outline of that part of your talk, and either an instruction or details of a visual aid such as a slide or handout or anything that you think appropriate.

Please note that you do NOT have to write the full text of a presentation.

- *Format: five prompt cards including one introduction, two or three with headings for the main body of the presentation and one conclusion*
 - *Each brief outline should contain material relevant to 'applying for a job' plus a sensible instruction or description/ illustration of a slide or handout*
- Up to 3 marks per prompt card to a maximum of 15 marks.*

- b) Advice for preparing a presentation usually emphasises the importance of 'knowing your audience'. Explain how having this information can help you to be a more effective speaker. **5**

- *Any knowledge about the expected audience helps the creation of rapport between the speaker and the spectators*
- *Knowing why they are attending and what they expect to get out of the presentation helps you plan the content to suit these aims so satisfying their expectations*
- *The number likely to attend enables effective practical preparation e.g. size of room, number of chairs, handouts etc. Poor arrangements won't get the audience on your side.*
- *Knowing the status of the audience members such as whether they are seniors, peers or from outside the organisation will affect your choice of style and content e.g. to use specialist vocabulary or not/ what to explain or not, so making your presentation accessible to all*
- *Anticipating any opposing views they are likely to have prepares you for arguments and questions showing that you are well informed*
- *If you are ready for arguments or disruption you are more likely to keep cool, remain in control and maintain your dignity thus earning the respect of your audience*
- *Other valid points*

One mark per point to a maximum of 5 marks.

Total 20 Marks

QUESTION 4**Marks****Throughout the question, please credit any valid alternative point.**

- a) Informal communication occurs during casual conversation and social situations. If this becomes the main method of communication, an organisation has serious problems with its formal methods of communication.
- i) What might cause an organisation's formal communication methods to fail? **5**
- *Management's failure to ask for or to listen to feedback from the rest of the organisation*
 - *'No news is good news': management can mistakenly assume that everything is working and communication is happening*
 - *Organisation's ability to communicate can be affected by its size and/ or its geographical spread*
 - *Implementation of change to organisation's structure can have an effect: different reporting lines so there is doubt as to who is reporting to whom, who needs to know and what do they need to know?*
 - *Changes to procedures: lack of understanding/ failure of new procedures forces staff to resort to informal methods*
- Up to 5 marks for coherent explanation.*
- ii) What can an organisation do to ensure that its formal communication methods work well? **5**
- *Problems of size and spread can be dealt with by formation of smaller teams where ideas and knowledge can be easily shared to tackle well-defined tasks*
 - *Management should be prepared to recognize individual needs and talents when planning major re-organisations*
 - *Need to acknowledge the potential problems associated with change and make special efforts to ease the flow of information and to improve communication*
 - *Management should invite feedback and monitor the situation following any major change*
- Up to 5 marks for coherent description of remedial action.*
- b) Advances in the use of computer and telecommunications technology have changed the ways that business and communication is conducted. **10**

Analyse the **positive** and **negative effects** of these advances in Information and Computer Technology on business today.

Positive effects:

- *Speed of communication has increased so information can be processed faster*
- *Access to more/ different information can help with decision making*
- *Businesses can reach a wider audience*
- *Employees can become more productive*
- *The business can be more competitive*
- *Employees can work from home reducing overheads*
- *Computers can do repetitive jobs*
- *It may be possible to reduce the workforce, saving on costs*

Negative effects:

- *Commits business to continual change: ICT equipment is expensive and needs updating often*
- *Not all equipment is compatible*
- *Information may be less secure*
- *People may lose their jobs*
- *Staff will have to be trained to use the equipment*
- *Health and safety issues for staff using PCs*

Up to 5 marks for identification of any relevant advantages and disadvantages and up to 5 marks for meaningful discussion or analysis of these.

Total 20 Marks

QUESTION 5

Marks

Throughout the question, please credit any valid alternative point.

- a) A **formal report** is usually based on detailed research of a problem. It can be a very long document divided into several sections to help readers find their way around it. **15**

Name the **headings** of FIVE of the many sections that make up a formal report AND describe the **content or function** of each of your chosen sections.

- *Title page – can include some or all of the following: subject; recipients; author; date of completion; file reference; circulation list; indication of priority or confidentiality*
- *Summary – serves as a reminder of the main points to people who have read the report; sometimes circulated as a document in its own right to people who have an interest but no time to read the whole report*
- *Terms of reference – based on the original instructions and can include: reason for writing report; scope – limits/ parameters of investigation area; whether recommendations should be included; deadline*
- *Introduction – background to report – expands the terms of reference*
- *Procedures/ methods – how the investigation was conducted: what methods of data collection were used; people who were interviewed; any observations that were made; documents that were consulted*
- *Findings – accumulated data from interviews, documents or observation is presented in an organised, logical fashion*
- *Conclusions – an objective statement of what the findings have shown; a summary of the principal findings often used by people who do not wish to read the whole report; should be concise and self-explanatory; conclusions generally written in the past tense*
- *Recommendations – identify how to solve the problem or what action to be taken; these should be made, when asked for, on the basis of the findings and should flow logically from the conclusions; generally expressed in the future tense*
- *Appendices – supplementary information which does not fit into the body of the report but is relevant to the findings; can be in the form of documents, graphs or charts*
- *Bibliography – list of references used in preparing the report whenever published material has been consulted; entries are listed alphabetically by author's last name*

One mark per heading named plus up to 2 marks for description of content to a maximum of 15 marks.(5x3)

- b) Briefly describe the characteristics of a **commissioned report** AND give TWO examples of this type of report. **5**

- *A one-off report with a specific purpose*
- *Requires research and investigation of some kind with resulting information summarized in an easy to read format*
- *Conclusions are an essential part of this type of report*
- *Recommendations are only included if asked for at the outset*
- *Examples: researching potential markets; investigation of accident/ recurring problem; the reasons for an increase in complaints; why staff turnover has increased; any valid example*

Up to 3 marks for characteristics described; one mark for each valid example to a maximum of 2 marks.

Total 20 Marks

QUESTION 6**Marks****Throughout the question, please credit any valid alternative point.**

a) Briefly describe TWO **negative** characteristics of EACH of the following leadership styles: **6**

- Democratic
- Laissez-faire
- Autocratic

Democratic

- *Because of the 'us and we' approach, leader may sometimes be seen as being unsure of him/herself*
- *Everything can become a subject of group discussion and decision lacking leadership*

Laissez-faire

- *Decision making can be haphazard*
- *Little evidence of responsibility being taken by the leader*
- *Allowing the group to find its own way can leave it floundering with little direction or motivation*

Autocratic

- *Domination of leader's will on group members can result in passive resistance*
- *Group requires continual pressure in order to get things done*

Up to 2 marks for each characteristic to a maximum of 6 marks.

b) People have different styles of leadership, but what do you think a person has to do to become an **effective leader**? **5**

The following points are not prescriptive: we are looking for a brief but coherent discussion about leadership and which shows an understanding of the concept.

- *Each leadership style has its own good or not-so-good characteristics and uses leadership in a different way*
- *Whilst different styles are not necessarily good or bad, right or wrong and are the preferred style of each individual, a single leadership style might not be appropriate for every situation or group*
- *Any leadership can be effective or ineffective depending upon the context or circumstances in which it is exercised*
- *Effective leaders need to be flexible and adapt styles to meet the needs of the situation and to accommodate others*
- *The ideal leaders need to be willing to change and to switch their comfortable and preferred styles if necessary – but they are only human*
- *Other valid observations*

Up to 5 marks.

- c) A group will typically be made up of people with very different personalities. Dr Meredith Belbin identified different roles, known as team types, for people depending on the way they behaved as members of a group. **9**

List the typical features, strengths and weaknesses of EACH of the following **team types**:

- Completer
- Plant
- Shaper

Completer

- *Typical features: painstaking, orderly, anxious, conscientious*
- *Strengths: good pursuer, perfectionist*
- *Weaknesses: worries about small things, does not let go*

Up to 3 marks for correctly identified features, strengths and weaknesses.

Plant

- *Typical features: individualist, unorthodox*
- *Strengths: genius, imaginative, intellectual*
- *Weaknesses: up in the clouds, difficult to manage, contempt for protocol*

Up to 3 marks for correctly identified features, strengths and weaknesses.

Shaper

- *Typical features: highly strung, outgoing*
- *Strengths: drive and readiness to challenge inertia*
- *Weaknesses: prone to provocation, irritation and impatience*

Up to 3 marks for correctly identified features, strengths and weaknesses.

Total 20 Marks