

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT JANUARY 2005

Communication

Level 3

General Comments

This paper performed appropriately as a means of testing candidates' ability to demonstrate the required skills at Level 3. The agreed pass mark was 29, reflecting the typical achievement of the minimally competent candidate.

As a topic, the subject of gender differences in educational achievement appeared to engage the interest of candidates, but many drew on specialist knowledge, or supposition, not contained in the documents in their responses to the questions. Question 4 in particular required very careful reading and synthesis of the source material in order to provide an effective response to a rather complex question. As a balance to this, however, other questions in Part A, especially Questions 1 and 3, were relatively straightforward and more able candidates often scored highly. Too many candidates did not read Question 1 carefully enough and spent unnecessary time and effort on supplying information from all documents instead of the two required by the question. There were some interesting interpretations of the third image in Document 3; Action Man was thought variously to be cradling a baby, nappies, bedclothes, tissues, a pillow or building materials! Most candidates were able to identify that the three images represented a progression of man's role in society as suggested in Document 3, though too few clearly explained how image and text linked.

In Question 2, many candidates paid insufficient regard to the second half of the question, which invited them to explain why male behaviour needs to change. Many also missed the focus of the question and attempted to use the point about media imagery in their response, without explaining how this might change male behaviour. As already stated, Question 4 proved to be challenging, but many otherwise able candidates missed out this question altogether – presumably because they were running short of time – and missed the opportunity for 7 marks. In some cases, this may have been a crucial factor in their eventual overall success or otherwise.

The article format for the extended answer to Question 5 in Part B appeared to present fewer problems than a report, but a significant minority still lost marks through failing to provide a heading or inappropriate use of a letter format. There were some fluent and well synthesised presentations of the arguments, though few were able to bring these to an effective conclusion with appropriate suggestions addressing the concerns raised. The majority of responses showed a reasonable level of understanding, and better candidates provided depth as well as breadth of information. The standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar was again generally poor for candidates at this level.

Recommendation to Centres

Centres are reminded that at Level 3, mastery of the basic rules of spelling, punctuation and grammar is essential, and it should not be assumed that all candidates studying at Level 3 in academic or vocational subjects will necessarily have this ability. Ensure ALL candidates who are entered for the Communication Key Skill at this level have the appropriate skills and knowledge to allow them to be successful. It is apparent that some centres have not sufficiently prepared candidates in the conventions of writing letters, reports and articles.

Coaching in examination technique would also help to ensure that candidates perform to the best of their abilities. Poor time management too frequently prevents otherwise capable candidates from being successful. Questions, or parts of questions, asking for simple identification of information seldom require detailed explanation; time spent on unnecessarily long answers here would be better spent on sections of Part A specifically asking for explanations, and on the extended response to the question in Part B. Attention should be paid to the requirements of the question; for instance, in the January paper many candidates wasted time by writing about all four documents in Question 1, which clearly indicated that only Documents 1 and 4 should be used.

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