

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT MARCH 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, although there were more opportunities than usual for otherwise able candidates to lose marks. This was reflected in the agreed pass mark of 27, at the lower end of the typical range.

The topic of regional accents, although within the experience of most candidates, produced some responses which were too simplistic, and few candidates appreciated the irony of the caption to Document 4. Question 1 proved difficult for many candidates, often through their failure to take note of the need to focus on employer perceptions. On the whole, negative perceptions seemed easier to identify than positive. Lower marks were awarded than is usual for Question 1. Most candidates were able to identify the three reasons for the growth in mixed accents required by Question 2, but many did not sufficiently explore the different perspectives provided by the two documents to gain high marks on the second part of the question. Although Question 3 was quite complex in some ways, candidates were able to score high marks by ensuring they paid attention to all its constituent parts. Some neglected to explain three views from Document 3 to support their argument, or failed to notice that not all the views shared the same viewpoint. Too many candidates appeared to believe that Beryl Bainbridge was the writer of Document 2; this usually rendered their efforts to answer the second part of the question difficult if not fruitless, and resulted in marks being lost in spite of some perceptive attempts at synthesis.

In Question 5, a significant number of candidates did not include a title for their article but generally a suitable tone was used. Few candidates failed to structure their work, but their use of paragraphs was in many cases somewhat arbitrary. Relevant information was usually presented in the candidate's own words, with only a few introducing quotes from the documents without using them to illustrate their own points. Few candidates, however, drew on all the documents. Some candidates concentrated solely on the negative effects and did not give a balanced view of the situation. Advice was usually given but sometimes this was not related to information in the texts and was based on their own experience and opinion. 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. The art of synthesis needs to be taught as many candidates find it difficult to explain and discuss identified points. Questions in Part A do not require lengthy explanation, and in some cases only ask for points to be identified. Time spent on unnecessarily long answers here would be better spent on the extended response to the question in Part B, which, it should be emphasised, is worth 50% of the total marks for the paper. Candidates need to ensure they read the question carefully. Although less of a problem with this paper than has recently been the case, candidates should be reminded that they are only credited with information which is contained within the source documents and should not use previous knowledge or opinions.

Keith Washington
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