

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT NOVEMBER 2005

Communication

Level 3

General Comments

This paper provided a straightforward test at Level 3 for candidates, and performed satisfactorily within the Level 3 specification. The pass mark was set at 29, reflecting the typical achievement of the minimally competent candidate at Key Skills Level 3.

"Dangerous Holidays" proved to be of general interest and sufficiently within candidates' experience to make the source documents accessible. However, more than a few candidates introduced material not contained within the source documents into their answers, particularly in Question 5.

Question 1 posed no particular problems to candidates, especially those who followed the instruction to use information from the two specified documents. Full marks were awarded to the majority of candidates attempting this question.

Questions 2 and 4 were similar, but not the same, and required careful reading particularly in the second part of each question. Candidates at Level 3 must be able to tackle complex questions of this sort satisfactorily; weaker candidates often neglect the second part of the question, which may be worth half of the marks for the question. Both of these questions called for a discussion, and the ability to evaluate, not simply identify, points raised in the documents. Similarly in Question 3, high-scoring candidates not only interpreted the images but went on to relate these meanings to the text of the documents in which they appeared, explaining how, and how far, the images supported the text.

On this occasion, Part B called for a formal letter, often the most problematic form for candidates to master. For the purposes of Key Skills, it is not acceptable to include the sender's name above the address, whereas if the recipient is a member of a large organisation, as is often the case in these scenarios, the recipient's name must be included before the second address. Other details often omitted or incorrectly formulated are the date, an appropriate salutation and closure, and a suitably formal tone throughout. To achieve high marks, candidates must pay close attention to what they have been asked to do and respond to all elements of the question, as well as showing they can use spelling, punctuation and grammar with the competence expected at Level 3. A disappointingly low number of candidates seem to be able to write consistently well-structured sentences, using commas, apostrophes and capital letters in the correct place and context.

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. Centres where coaching is provided in the conventions of writing letters, reports and articles give their candidates a considerable advantage when approaching the test.

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. Guidance should be given in reading and interpreting the requirements of typical question formats. For instance, where a candidate is asked to "assess" or "explain" the "extent to which" one set of data is supported by another, they should be alerted to the fact that this is an invitation to use the tools of contrast and comparison to discuss, as objectively as possible, the issues raised by the given information, with the likelihood that more than one viewpoint is possible.

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