

## January Test Series 2007

### Chief Examiner's Report

#### 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 pass mark reflected the typical achievement of the minimally competent candidate.

"Children and Consumerism" was a topic well within the experience of all candidates and the source documents were informative and sufficiently challenging. The questions followed a similar pattern to recent previous papers and candidates who paid careful attention to all parts of each question appeared to find the paper straightforward to answer.

There were fewer marks than usual available for Question 1, but the three damaging effects on the environment were identified by most candidates. Several candidates confused the characteristics of children which made them vulnerable to advertising required by Question 2 with the advertisers' techniques to be identified in Question 3. Nevertheless, a significant number of candidates managed to identify three reasons using both documents as required, although some only used Document 1. The extent of the impact of advertising on children, and how this might change according to the age of the child, was often only sketchily explained.

Question 3 required candidates to identify advertisers' techniques from each of the three documents specified. This was generally well done -there were several to choose from - though a few candidates provided examples of other techniques which were not mentioned in the source material, usually to support their interpretations of the images in Document 3. Weaker candidates were often less precise in linking their explanations of the images to the techniques they had selected in their responses to the first part of the question, and it was rare to find an answer which adequately explained the extent to which the images exemplified these techniques. The ability to develop a relevant argument based on accurately identified information is typically what differentiates the successful Level 3 candidate from those not at the required standard, and this was evident again in Question 4, where many candidates identified three concerns but were not able to tackle the issue of the effectiveness of the industry response to any great depth.

Few candidates observed all the format requirements for a formal letter. Common errors were inclusion of the sender's name before the address, omission of either the sender's or the recipient's address, omission of the date or incorrect form of salutation and/or matching close. Most adopted a suitable tone for the given context, but the standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar was again generally poor for candidates at this level, even sometimes for those whose reading ability and understanding were apparently strong. On the whole, responses demonstrated good understanding of the relevant concerns about consumerism though weaker candidates often relied too heavily on wording from the text in expressing their views. Those who paid attention to the instructions provided by the bullet points in the question were more effective in organising their ideas within a coherent structure. Better candidates included introductory and concluding paragraphs, were able to discern the subtler points raised by the source material, and effectively linked their ideas in a balanced and coherent fashion. Some answers were rather brief, suggesting inadequate time management.

## Recommendations 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. In this instance, for example, practice in correctly formatting a letter for this purpose and consideration of the appropriate tone to adopt in a range of different contexts would have been beneficial.

Coaching in examination technique would also help to ensure that candidates perform to the best of their abilities. Poor time management sometimes prevents otherwise capable candidates from being successful. Answers to questions, or parts of questions, asking for simple identification of information will benefit from being concise. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading the question carefully and answering all its parts. Guidance should be given in reading and interpreting the vocabulary typically used in framing questions. For instance, where a candidate is asked to "assess", "explain" or "consider" the "extent to which" one argument or viewpoint is supported by other information provided, this indicates that more than one viewpoint is possible and all should be considered in their answer.

Candidates should appreciate that they are only rewarded for information which is taken from the source documents and should not use previous knowledge or personal opinions unrelated to the source material.

Chief Examiner  
Communication