

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT JUNE 2008

COMMUNICATION – Level 3

General Comments

The June paper performed satisfactorily in providing an appropriate test of Level 3 skills. The pass mark was in line with previous series.

The topic of ageism in the workplace was accessible for candidates although generally they did identify more with issues affecting younger rather than older people. The questions on the paper were relatively straightforward and in a format with which suitably prepared candidates should have been familiar.

Question 1: As usual, this required the straightforward identification of relevant points from two source documents. The best answers were concise and listed four forms of age discrimination in the workplace with little or no unnecessary explanation. However, others spent time writing lengthy answers which often contained material which was irrelevant or repetitive. A small number of candidates only used one document to find the forms of discrimination.

Question 2: Most candidates identified three perceptions based on a person's age. However, considerations of the significance of age-related prejudice were less well addressed. The majority of candidates simply repeated points from the text with little attempt to compare the two documents or in some cases did not consider significance at all. Weaker candidates misinterpreted the requirements of the second part of the question and explained how the two documents supported each other, rather than addressing how they agreed on the significance of age related prejudice.

Question 3: The majority of candidates identified suitable meanings for the images but some described the content. There were also a number of interpretations of the age of the woman in image 1, from young to old, with middle age being chosen to make the point that the image was age neutral. Some of the explanations for the links to the documents were a little convoluted. A significant number of candidates only linked each image to one document and stopped once both documents 1 and 3 had been referred to, not recognising that each of these two documents needed to be linked to each image for full marks.

Question 4: This question was frequently misinterpreted with candidates describing the actions individuals could take to combat ageism rather than identifying the formal measures put in place. Weaker candidates had problems considering the effectiveness of these measures or did not restrict themselves to information in the documents and merely discussed their personal opinion. Other candidates listed the benefits of having a diverse mix of employees, making the assumption that the laws would be effective rather than discussing the difficulties in making it happen. A significant number of candidates did not attempt the second part of the question, possibly because of time constraints.

Question 5: Generally candidates seemed familiar with the appropriate tone and structure for an article, although many lost a mark through failing to provide a suitable heading. Several attempted to reproduce the appearance of a magazine by writing in columns. This is not necessary and can be self penalizing since it takes up time, often reduces legibility and seems to distract candidates from organizing their ideas sensibly. However, many candidates used the bullet points in the question to help them produce a logically presented response.

Most candidates explained how old and young are affected by different forms of age discrimination, although weaker candidates tended to personalize the issue and add their own knowledge. Most identified the appropriate legislation and considered the benefits which could result.

The standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar was generally lower than that of recent tests. Many incorrectly transcribed words from the documents, such as ‘campaigns’ and ‘champions’.

Recommendations to Centres

Centres are again 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. It is important to ensure that 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.

Opportunities to practice techniques which commonly feature in level 3 tests should be given. Where coaching is provided in examination technique and the conventions of writing different types of document, centres give their candidates a considerable advantage when approaching the test. As part of the coaching, candidates should be advised to read questions carefully to ensure that directions are closely followed so that marks are not missed and time is not wasted. All should be provided with practice in skimming and scanning unfamiliar documents.