

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT MARCH 2007

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 agreed pass mark was 29, reflecting the typical achievement of the minimally competent candidate. Once again, however, it was noticeable that a significant number of candidates demonstrated a higher level of ability in Part A than in Part B, with some achieving an overall pass despite limited writing ability.

The topic of "Football Sponsorship" was within the experience of all candidates though some candidates' familiarity with the sport tempted them to introduce information not contained within the source documents. The source material itself provided a number of different perspectives on the subject at a level suitable for the purposes of a Level 3 test. The questions followed a similar pattern to recent previous papers and as before a candidate's ability to tackle the second, more discursive, part of questions in Part A was often a key determining factor of Level 3 ability.

Most candidates scored full marks on Question 1, though some included lengthy explanations which were unnecessary in a question requiring only identification of relevant points. Many candidates appeared to focus mainly on Document 1, but since "shirt sponsorship", mentioned in both Documents 1 and 2, was frequently identified as a method of sponsorship, examiners were usually able to award the additional mark for this. A few candidates mistakenly offered the definition of sponsorship from Document 1 as a specific method, and many confused sponsorship with TV advertising.

Most candidates found no difficulty in identifying two arguments against football sponsorship though some attributed the player's high pay as a specific consequence of sponsorship. Most were able to indicate at least one way in which Document 1 supported these arguments, although in some weaker candidates these were not clearly linked. Consideration of ways in which the documents did not agree was less effective and sometimes neglected altogether, and very few candidates provided a clear conclusion to their consideration of extent.

Candidates generally were able to score high marks for the first part of Question 3 provided they carefully compared the evidence of sponsorship, or its absence, in each image. It was hard to reward the comments of some candidates who attempted to argue that changing hairstyles or relative levels of muddiness were in some way linked to an increase in levels of sponsorship. The majority of candidates were less focussed in their attempts to relate their explanation of the images to the comments in Document 4, asserting support rather than indicating how this was so.

Weaker candidates tried to link unrelated statements about players travelling with fans in the bus and the extortionate price of the team strip.

The first part of Question 4 was reasonably well answered. Most candidates identified three reasons for commercial involvement in sponsorship which they expressed in a variety of ways. The majority of candidates attempted to assess the risks, though the reaction of fans was not often considered. Several candidates omitted this question in order to make time to complete Q5, often by weaker candidates or those that had spent too long answering Q1 in detail.

Although a few candidates scored excellent marks for Question 5, most were average and a substantial number scored very low marks, generally because of producing very short answers. It was disappointing to find that a large number of candidates demonstrated limited understanding of the report format, in terms not only of its structure and physical appearance but even its purpose. Some structured their answers as letters or essays; others misinterpreted the context provided by the question and wrote as if making a sales pitch on behalf of their local football club. Consequently, many candidates were not awarded the marks for using the correct format and tone for a formal report. More able candidates selected extensively and judiciously from the documents to explain the benefits of sponsorship, and to assess the advantages and disadvantages to the company of different types of football sponsorship. Some were somewhat unrealistic in their assumptions of peak-time viewing, worldwide sales and multi-million pound player transfers, and a few focussed incorrectly on the benefits to the football club rather than the sponsoring company. There was a tendency to extend beyond the information in the source documents when providing material to support arguments put forward. The possible reactions from supporters was generally well considered and most made sensible recommendations which were briefly explained. A surprising number of candidates advised against sponsorship of the local team, considering the benefits of grassroots sponsorship more beneficial for a local company.

As in previous series, the standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar was generally poor, even for otherwise stronger candidates. Many candidates referred to supporters as "supports", and sponsorship was routinely misspelt as "sponsorship" or "sponsourship". Other words commonly spelt incorrectly were "benefits", "business", "advertisement" and "receive".

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 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.

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