



**General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**Business and Communication  
Systems 3126**

**Foundation Tier 3126/1F**

**Report on the Examination**

*2008 examination - June series*

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## Foundation Tier – Theory Paper (3126/1F)

### **General**

It was very pleasing this year to note that ‘text language’ was less evident but disappointing to see that candidates did not write full sentences. There was less precision with the use of language and less use of specialist key terms than in previous years. There were fewer questions unanswered than in the past and this showed that candidates were more confident in attempting questions based on a wide range of topics from the specification. Many candidates seemed to have been well prepared for the examination and fewer appeared to be incorrectly entered for this level.

Few candidates were awarded the high performance level for Quality of Written Communication (QWC) on the Foundation Tier but there was an improvement on the Higher Tier. This element of the examination needs greater attention. Candidates should be encouraged to write in full sentences, using correct capitalisation and punctuation. Only black ink or a black ball-point pen should be used in order to make the scripts clearly legible. If a script is very difficult to read because a pencil or a coloured pen has been used, candidates could be disadvantaged.

Key-words such as ‘state’ and ‘explain’ in the rubric should be taken into account when answering questions and the marks allocated to each question are important indicators as to the type of response required. If there are three marks allocated, the candidate should respond with a statement and then two relevant development points in order to be awarded all three marks.

Other key words that have come up regularly in examination papers such as ‘actions’ appear not to be understood by candidates.

Candidates should be advised to read through the whole paper before beginning to write in order to become familiar with the Scenario and to get an indication of the requirements of the paper as a whole. The Scenario is an important part of the paper and in most questions candidates will gain extra marks if they refer to it.

### **Question One**

As in the past, this question was multiple choice and it was most pleasing to see that a good number of candidates scored the full eight marks, and that the majority of candidates were awarded four or more marks – much better than in previous years. This indicated that candidates had a better knowledge of the specification than previously, which is commendable.

This year, some candidates again circled more than one response when it clearly said ‘complete each sentence by circling the correct word or phrase’. If candidates circled more than one word or phrase, marks could not be awarded, even if one of the responses was correct. If candidates wish to alter their answer they should clearly cross out their incorrect response and then circle the replacement.

The majority of candidates recognised in 1 (b) that induction training should include Health and Safety procedures but in 1 (c) there was some confusion regarding preventing RSI by providing a first aid room. Many candidates struggled to answer both 1 (e) and 1 (h) and were perhaps confused between formal and informal communication.

### **Question Two**

In question 2 (a) most candidates knew the meaning of 'time rates' and explained it very well but did not offer a development or an example in order to be awarded the second mark. Some candidates confused 'time rates' with 'piece rates' or even thought it payment for a full week, month or year's work.

In question 2 (b) the better candidates knew the difference between 'basic wage' and 'commission' and were able to expand on their statements to gain the extra marks. The weaker candidates, however, thought that basic wage was linked to minimum wage or that commission was a bonus and a form of profit distribution from the company. Not many candidates talked of increased pay in relation to increased sales or that employees could be better motivated if commission was on offer. Some gave lengthy descriptions of how salesmen should sell cars, eg 'communicate well with customers' and, therefore, had completely misread the question. Few candidates picked up more than three marks on this question.

There were three marks for Quality of Written Communication. Very few candidates reached the high performance level, the majority scoring only one or two marks. There were examples of poor sentence construction with no initial capitals or punctuation used, and words which appeared in the question were sometimes spelt incorrectly.

In question 2 (c) (i), the majority of candidates were able to select the correct figure from Item B in order to calculate Joe's commission for January and for this they were awarded one mark. However, not all candidates were able to achieve the second mark by calculating 10% of £2400 so as to find the correct amount of commission he earned. This happened despite the fact that it does state on the front cover of the question paper that calculators may be used.

Question 2 (c) (ii) was not quite as well answered as (c) (i); fewer candidates calculated the correct total wage for Joe in February. Again not all candidates selected the correct figure from Item B. The Own Figure Rule (OFR) was used frequently and several candidates were awarded up to three marks for this. Many candidates did not add the basic wage of £680.

### **Question Three**

Generally candidates struggled with all parts of this question. This may be because of the need to understand specialist key terms.

Question 3 (a) asked for 'advantages to customers of using the online database' but many candidates answered the question from the point of view of advantages to the garage or to Alan himself. The weaker candidates, who had read the question correctly, were able to give one advantage but were unable to offer a valid development or an acceptable second advantage without repeating themselves. The most popular advantage was – 'do not have to travel to the garage to look at the cars'. Some candidates did not relate their answers to the 'online database' and incorrectly discussed the advantages of a database compared to a paper based system.

Better candidates were able to identify the search and sort elements that a database has to offer but did not always expand their advantages in order to gain full marks. The car enthusiasts merely talked about cars in general.

A number of candidates scored no marks at all for question 3 (b) because of either not reading the question correctly or not understanding the meaning of 'input device'. The most frequent incorrect answers were printers, memory sticks and floppy discs.

Candidates, who had understood the question, more often than not, gave keyboard and mouse as their chosen devices and sometimes went on to try to explain how they would be useful. The better candidates mentioned scanner, camera and mobile phone and gave good reasons as to their usefulness when creating an 'online database'.

There were two marks for each explanation of usefulness of the device chosen but not all candidates responded to this by giving a fuller explanation in order to gain both marks. A good response would have been – scanner (1 mark) – images can be scanned in (1 mark) from brochures or photographs (1 mark).

In question 3 (c) it was obvious that most candidates had a good knowledge of websites. They were able to identify two features but they did not always expand sufficiently on their explanation in order to be awarded two marks. However, there were some excellent answers gaining full marks.

Weaker candidates did not always understand the term 'features' and instead described how a website could be put together to advertise cars and that it should be updated often to include discount offers. Colour and text were mentioned frequently, without any clarification such as 'a colourful background or font' to improve the look and make the cars more attractive.

If the 'devices' chosen in 3 (b) and the 'features' chosen in 3 (c) were incorrect no marks could be awarded for the explanations.

#### **Question Four**

Responses to this question showed that almost all candidates were very familiar with the advantages/disadvantages of mobile phones and, therefore, could apply this knowledge to the given situation. Both parts (a) and (b) were answered very well. Invariably the correct selection of phone was made from Item C and candidates were able to relate its features to Alan's requirements. Consequently many candidates were awarded full marks for this question.

#### **Question Five**

Question 5 (a) proved challenging for most candidates as they were not looking at the recruitment element of the question, but rather seeing the website as a method to advertise Alan's business or as an advantage to the applicants themselves.

Many candidates did not appreciate the fact that a rally enthusiast might be looking at the website and come across the recruitment page and see the advertisement and respond to it. This type of response is to be encouraged as it relates directly to the scenario. Better candidates did say that the website would attract applicants from a wider area; therefore Alan would get more applicants to choose from.

Very few candidates mentioned that on-line applications were possible (1) which would speed up the process (1) as there would be no delays in sending the required documents (1).

There were five marks for this task but very few candidates scored more than two marks. Two QWC marks were also available. Not many candidates were awarded the full two marks as once again there was little evidence of capitalisation and good punctuation. Sometimes words were spelt incorrectly when they had already appeared in the question.

The key word in the rubric was 'explain', but some candidates made a list using bullet points, which did not include any explanation at all. This type of response only attracted one mark for the Quality of Written Communication.

In 5 (b) many candidates did not appear to know what 'advertise internally' meant. Shop windows, local newspapers, using family and friends to pass messages on regarding job advertisements were frequently mentioned, none of which come under the heading of 'internal'. Better candidates, however, did understand that it could be an advantage to Alan in recruiting from existing staff as he would know the applicant, it would be cheaper and it might be quicker. However, not all candidates were able to develop their answers sufficiently to be awarded three marks per advantage. Nevertheless, a small minority of candidates gave excellent answers, eg the applicants would know the company (1 mark) they would not need much training (1 mark), therefore the process would be quicker (1).

Question 5 (c) was not very well answered mainly because candidates did not know what the word 'action' meant in relation to the question. A large number of candidates gave a one-word answer for the three 'actions' such as 'experience', 'CV', 'application form' – none of which gained any marks. The better candidates who said 'look at the application form', 'shortlist' and 'arrange an interview', were awarded three marks and if the description of each 'action' was relevant, they were awarded full marks.

### **Question Six**

In 6 (a) candidates were asked to state two methods of verbal communication that Alan might use. Most candidates were able to provide two methods but, once again, there was little evidence of a full explanation of the situations in which they would be used to benefit Alan, therefore valuable marks were lost. Verbal communication such as 'video conferencing' was given but candidates rarely understood what it meant and the situation in which it would be used. It was rather surprising that email, business letter and memo were suggested as verbal communication. Email was a particularly frequent response from candidates.

Candidates struggled with question (b), either because they had come to the end of the paper and had run out of steam or lacked enough knowledge. They were asked for one advantage to Alan of working from home and again the question appeared to be misread because a good number of candidates gave two, sometimes three advantages and did not develop any of them for the two extra marks. Many candidates said it would give him more time with his family and take breaks whenever he felt like it. The better candidates suggested that he would have peace and quiet (1 mark) therefore could do more work (1 mark) which would be beneficial to the business (1 mark).

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics page of the AQA Website](#).