



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Business and Communication Systems 3126

Higher Tier 3126/1H

Report on the Examination

2008 examination - June series

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Higher Tier – Theory Paper (3126/1H)

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

The first four questions were expected to be ones that settled the candidates and posed few problems. However, this did not appear to be the case.

Question 1 (a) worked well with the vast majority of candidates gaining the mark, however, 1 (b) caused candidates problems with over half not circling the correct answer. The same problem occurred in 1 (c), with many candidates giving the name of the Microsoft program rather than the software. 1 (d) and 1 (e) were well done by candidates.

Question Two

The responses to this question showed that almost all of the 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. Those students who failed to gain full marks did so because they only offered one or two points with little development.

Question Three

Question 3 (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 to the scenario, which is always advisable throughout the paper, whenever the opportunity arises. The 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 mark) which would speed up the process (1) as there would be no delays in sending the required documents (1 mark).

In question 3 (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'.

The better candidates, however, did understand that perhaps it would be an advantage to Alan in recruiting from existing staff because he would know the applicant, it would be cheaper and it might be quicker but not all the candidates were able to develop their answers sufficiently to be awarded three marks per advantage. However, a small minority of candidates gave excellent answers, eg the applicants would know the company (1 mark) so they would not need much training (1 mark), therefore the process would be quicker (1 mark).

Question 3 (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. Many candidates failed to identify shortlisting as an action.

Question Four

Candidates struggled with the specialist vocabulary in question 4 (a), and few could identify or describe even an agenda.

Question 4 (b) was done better by many candidates, but a large number would have had the managers travelling to one of the garages – not considering the flooding. Video conferencing or video links were by far the most popular answer.

In 4 (c) (i), candidates largely managed to list both an advantage and disadvantage but did not manage to explain them in any way. Many candidates just obtained the two marks.

Candidates struggled to answer 4 (c) (ii) which was intended to assess their skills of evaluation.

In question 4 (d), candidates were asked to state two methods of verbal communication that Alan might use. Some candidates were able to provide two methods of verbal communication but, 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. Phone call and face to face were the most popular correct answers.

In question 4 (e), many candidates had no idea as to how computers could be linked if they were not in the same office. However, in 4 (f), although many candidates had no idea as to how the computers could be linked, they were more able to explain an advantage. The most common answer seen was to access files at home and work.

Question Five

Despite being at the end of the paper there was no evidence that candidates were struggling for time. The majority of candidates got at least half marks for this question and the Quality of Written Communication was as good as we would expect from higher tier candidates. Most candidates identified the cost of building cellular offices as a disadvantage and the motivational aspects of working together as an advantage. It was pleasing to see very few lists.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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