



General Certificate of Secondary Education

**Business and Communication
Systems 3126**

Foundation Tier 3126/1F

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

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Foundation Tier – Theory Paper (3126/1F)

General

It would be advantageous to have access to the relevant question paper and mark scheme when reading the comments below.

This year there was less evidence that candidates had been incorrectly entered for this level of examination. Their performance showed a wide range of abilities and on several occasions a lack of knowledge and interpretation of the rubric.

Some of the candidates did not appear to be aware of the context used in this year's examination. In order to get 'a feel for the paper', it is advisable that the candidates should read the scenario and all the questions before beginning to write. This would be five minutes of their time well spent.

Notice should be taken of the marks allocated to questions so that candidates can tailor their response in order to gain as many marks as possible. Key words are important. If a question asks the candidates to 'Name' or 'List' as in questions 4(f) and 4(g), all that is required is a list of two/three items in order to answer the question appropriately. However, if the question asks the candidates to 'State two features' or 'Give two examples' and also to explain them, as in questions 3(d) and 5(a), a much more detailed answer is required which shows judgement/analysis of the chosen feature or example.

Most candidates had attempted every question, there were fewer gaps than in previous years. Centres are reminded that the whole of the specification should be taught in preparation for this examination. Over a number of years every element within the specification will be tested at least once.

There was less evidence of text language, which was very pleasing, but spelling and the use of inappropriate words was still in evidence, for example 'no' when it should have been 'know' and 'weather' in place of 'whether'. Words such as 'stuff', 'gonna' and 'wanna' appeared on scripts. Unsurprisingly, such practice does not attract the higher marks within the quality of written communication element of the paper.

Question One

This multiple choice question was not as well answered as in the past. There were very few candidates who scored the full eight marks, showing gaps in the candidates' overall knowledge of the specification.

It stated clearly in the rubric that candidates should '*circle the correct answer*'. However, again this year, candidates had underlined or circled more than one answer and, therefore, were not awarded a mark.

The majority of candidates recognised in 1(b) that a laser printer would be best for producing high quality colour photographs, but not many candidates were able to distinguish between "hot desking" and "open plan" in 1(c). There was also some confusion in 1(f) between "Job Centre" and "Private Recruitment Agency". "Equal Opportunities Act" was frequently preferred to "Equal Pay Act" in 1(g), even though the word 'pay' was included in the question.

Question Two

Part (a) was answered reasonably well and the better candidates demonstrated an understanding of the *advantages of effective communication* in a business setting *between the retailer and the customer*, and the positive effect this would have on the business in general. However, the weaker candidates merely named methods of communication such as posters, letters or flyers, which the retailer could use to promote his business, so they lost valuable marks.

Quite a number of candidates completely misread the question in 2(b). Even some of the better candidates answered this part with 'customers' rather than 'employees' in mind. Marks were lost unnecessarily due to a lack of reading or of understanding the rubric. However, some candidates successfully related their answers to the scenario, stating clearly the disadvantages of poor communication between the retailer and his employees.

Question Three

Some candidates were confused between 3(a), which asked for "the importance of having a workstation which would allow Paul to work comfortably and safely", and the question asked in 3(c) which required an explanation of "three **actions** Paul should take to protect his health when using a computer".

Some candidates did not understand the question in 3(a) and gave answers which related to the protection of Paul's health rather than to the general office environment which would allow Paul to work comfortably and safely.

Question 3(b)(i) was well answered and most candidates selected a suitable desk and a suitable chair for Paul's office, together with their correct prices, and were awarded the full 4 marks.

In 3(b)(ii), most candidates were able to justify the choices they had made in 3(b)(i). Their answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of having the correct furniture for the effective running of an office.

There were four marks for 3(b)(ii) and a large majority of candidates were awarded all four. These marks were split between the suitability of the comments made by the candidate either by awarding three marks for one piece of furniture and one mark for the other, or two marks apiece.

In 3(c), the better candidates gave three good actions which Paul could take to protect his health when using a computer.

The better candidates were awarded full marks in Question 3(d) for being able to state and explain the usefulness of two 'features' of word processing software, which Paul might use in running his business. The two most popular being "Clipart" and "Mail Merge". However, the weaker candidates lost valuable marks as they did not understand the difference between **features** of word processing and **software packages** and went on to suggest "Excel", "Publisher" or "Access". Alternatively, they discussed documents such as letters, flyers or memos. This highlights a weakness amongst some candidates in the use of appropriate terms and concepts.

Question Four

Parts (a) and (b) were generally well done. There were two marks available for each part – one mark for a reason/disadvantage and one mark for a development. Unfortunately, some candidates stated two reasons in (a) and/or two disadvantages in (b) without any development for either. This shows a failure to read the rubric of a question and to respond accordingly to the marks available. There was also evidence that some candidates did not know the significance of specialist magazines and said that it would have been better advertised at the Job Centre.

The better candidates were able to select information contained in the rubric and use it, for example, the fact that “The Shopkeeper” was a monthly magazine and also that it was for owners and managers of convenience stores. They were able to make reasoned judgements about the use of “The Shopkeeper” magazine in comparison with other media for the given purpose.

Parts (c) and (d) were answered well and many candidates scored 8 or more marks out of the twelve marks allocated collectively for both parts. The four items of essential information from Paul’s advertisement for a new member of staff were very varied.

The weaker candidates had clearly not read the advertisement and talked about choices like qualifications, job descriptions and that applicants would be interested in the amount of salary offered, when no actual amount was included in the advertisement. There was little evidence of reference to the scenario, once again, in this question, when it would have been very appropriate to do so.

Part 4(e) – many candidates could name a step which Paul would take but were unable to achieve the second mark because they could not explain why he should take that step. Sometimes two steps were given without any developments, so only gaining one mark. This again demonstrates failure to read the rubric.

In part 4(f), most candidates knew about the various Acts but did not know their correct names. “The Equal Pay Act” and “The Equal Opportunities Act” were very well known. Some candidates failed to insert the word “Act” in the name and were penalised. “The Racial Discrimination Act” was mentioned frequently in preference to “The Race Relations Act” and again no mark awarded. The weaker candidates described the law rather than name the actual Act – for example, “men and women have the same pay”, showing a weakness in the use of specialist terms.

For part 4(g), most candidates scored two marks out of the possible three, which showed a good understanding of terms and conditions of employment. However, the weaker candidates tended to mention various contact details.

Question Five

Part 5(a) - a large number of candidates did not even attempt this question or perhaps they ran out of time, which would indicate bad time-management as 5(a) carried 6 marks.

Several candidates who did attempt the question, did not know what a “fringe benefit” was and referred to “extra payments” such as “a bonus”, “overtime” or “commission”, which were incorrect. As a consequence, they struggled to explain the advantages to Fresh Fare of giving extra payments to its staff.

The better candidates, who knew the meaning of “fringe benefits”, were able to explain the advantages to Fresh Fare.

Part 5(b) - this question carried the most marks on the paper, apart from question 1. Many who answered this question gained full marks. Some candidates managed to calculate the weekly and the Sunday overtime, but did not add them together to find the total, and therefore were only awarded seven marks out of eight.

The weaker candidate found it difficult to select, interpret and use the information supplied to come to the correct figure.

The Own Figure Rule (OFR) was used frequently and some of the information selected was often not in the correct order and had to be searched for by the examiner.

It was a shame that many candidates did not have access to a calculator and had to attempt to multiply on paper. Some did the multiplication by writing the amount down four times and adding them up, which obviously disadvantaged them by the amount of time it took.

Quality of Written Communication

This was assessed in Questions 2, 4(c) and 4(d). The overall standard does not appear to have improved from last year. Very few candidates scored 2/2 for Question 2 and 3/3 for Questions 4(c) and 4(d) combined.

There were examples where initial capitals or punctuation in sentences were missing. Sometimes capitals were inserted in the middle of sentences when not required. Specialist terms were seldom used, even by the better candidates, and spelling appears to be at an all-time low.

Words which appeared in either the stem of the question or in the rubric of the question were spelt incorrectly, such as ‘manager’ appearing as ‘manger’, ‘customer’ as ‘costumer’ and ‘experience’ as ‘experiance’.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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