

Level Diploma in Fire Science and Fire Safety

Unit 5 – Leadership and Management

Examiner Report – March 2015

Introduction

Candidates generally performed well on this examination with 66% of those who attempted the paper achieving a Pass. This is a slight improvement on pass rates in 2014. However, few candidates achieved very high marks and very few A or B Grades were awarded.

There were a few instances where candidates presented answers that were not relevant to the specific question asked. Candidates should be aware that at this level, they need to ensure that they are assessing and addressing the specific context set out in the question. In addition, candidates should ensure that they fully answer the question; at this level, brief lists of points will not provide an adequate response where questions ask for explanations.

Question 1

- a) *Describe four work-related factors that can lead to an employee suffering from stress in the workplace. (8 marks)*
- b) *Explain how a manager should approach a situation where a member of their team appears to be suffering from work-related stress. (12 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This was a popular and well answered question with most candidates who attempted the question achieving a good mark.

In response to part a), successful candidates recognised that that workplace stress could be related a range of factors including demands of the job, insecurities in the workplace, the relationships/atmosphere in the workplace, lack of skills/training, lack of development opportunities and poor management skills. However, some candidates failed to provide four appropriate examples of factors. Other candidates ignored the requirement to “describe” and presented their points as a list without providing any additional description to explain their point. Candidates who omitted the description were unable to attain the additional marks available for description.

In response to part b), successful candidates identified the importance of Identifying the problem, communicating with employees, ensuring that staff understand what the job entails, setting performance targets and using HR policies and procedures. Less successful candidates provided generic list of points, often without referencing them back to the situation specified in the question.

Question 2

- a) *Explain the purpose of a job description within the recruitment process and state the information normally found in a job description. (8 marks)*

- b) Explain the purpose of the person/employee specification within the recruitment process. (4 marks)*
- c) Explain two of the advantages and two of the disadvantages of interviews as a method of selection. (8 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

In response to part a), the majority of candidates were able to describe the purpose and content of a job description. However, some candidates failed to explain the value of the job description in drawing up an appropriate person specification and in contributing to the selection process.

Some candidates were unable to provide a full explanation of the role of the person specification within the recruitment process. Most candidates were able to provide a general description of its purpose but the value of the person specification in shortlisting, comparing applicants and providing the basis for interview questions was often missed.

Candidates generally provided good answers to part c). However, candidates some wrote about logistically issues such as cost and time factors instead of focusing specifically on interviews “as a method of selection” as required by the question.

Question 3

Describe the advantages and the disadvantages of the following methods of training and development:

- a) On-the-job (5 marks)*
- b) Secondment (5 marks)*
- c) Case studies (5 marks)*
- d) Electronic learning (5 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This was a popular question and was generally answered well. Most candidates recognised the requirement to provide both advantages and disadvantages and structured their answers accordingly.

Candidates generally demonstrated most knowledge in relation to on-the-job and electronic learning and gained high marks for their response to these elements of the question. Understanding of secondment and case studies as methods of learning was less well developed.

Question 4

- a) Describe the key considerations for managers in preparing and delivering effective presentations to their team.(16 marks)*
- b) Describe the benefits of downwards communication within an organisation. (4 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This was a popular question with candidates performing particularly well on part a).

In response to part a), successful candidates covered each of the following areas: purpose, target audience, structure, location and available resources and audience engagement. Less successful candidates limited their response to just a few of the areas and did not expand their points to explain what needed to be covered and the reasons.

Many candidates provided poor responses to part b). Some mixed up downwards communication with other types of communication such as upwards and lateral; many were unable to draw out benefits such as consistent message, ensuring that all staff were kept informed and providing a structure (eg procedures).

Question 5

Describe the main features of the following leadership styles and give examples of situations when each style would be appropriate.

- a) *Autocratic (5 marks)*
- b) *Transactional (5 marks)*
- c) *Democratic (5 marks)*
- d) *Transformational (5 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This was a popular and generally well answered question although some candidates provided only very brief descriptions or else some omitted to provide examples as required by the question.

Many candidates had some knowledge of the styles. Most candidates appeared to have most knowledge of Autocratic and Democratic styles and provided their fullest responses to these elements of the question. Candidates generally provided least information on the Transactional with Transformational styles and a common error was to confuse these two styles.

Candidates should be aware that Transactional management is based on staff agreeing to obey their leader in return for pay; the leader has the right to punish staff if they fail to meet targets. A Transformational leader inspires the team with a shared vision, is highly visible, places emphasis on communicating with staff, and is constantly looking for ways to add value to the organization.

Question 6

As money is not believed to be a major source of motivation, describe and explain the actions managers can take to retain the interest and commitment of their staff. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question provided candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of factors affecting motivation. Many candidates provided their response as a list of points. Some lists were quite brief and points were not explained or linked back to motivation as required by the question. Although many candidates achieved reasonable marks for this question, few achieved high marks due to the lack of depth and explanations provided in the responses.

Some candidates described the theories of Maslow, Herzberg, and McGregor without actually applying the information to the question.

Examples of the types of areas that could have been explored in responses include: being a good role model, creating a vision, communicating, ensuring staff have the right resources, encouraging ideas, developing effective teams and providing training and development opportunities.

Question 7

- a) *Define delegation and describe the factors which would influence a manager's decision to delegate work to a member of their team. (12 marks)*
- b) *Explain the major barriers to successful delegation. (8 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Many candidates defined delegation correctly in response to part a). However, some did not focus on factors which would "influence a manager's decision" to delegate and therefore missed key elements out of their response such as:

- manager's workload and number of staff supervised
- associated risks
- skills of the employee to be given the work
- cost involved
- extent to which experience will benefit the employee

Many candidates successfully identified barriers in response to part b), citing some of the following:

- unwillingness of manager to delegate
- unreadiness of subordinates
- complexity of work
- not part of day to day culture

Some candidates wrote at great length about staff not wanting accept delegated tasks, jealousy of other employees and staff feeling they were being given the wrong work to do/having work dumped on them by their manager.

Question 8

You have been asked to organise and Chair a meeting.

- a) *What organisational arrangements would you ensure are in place before the meeting is held? (5 marks)*
- b) *Explain the role of the Chair in the running of a successful meeting. (15 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

In response to part a), many candidates focused on location and refreshments and omitted other considerations such as ensuring that an agenda had been circulated to appropriate attendees and that arrangements were in place for taking notes/minutes during the meeting.

Candidates often presented brief responses to part b). This section of the question was worth 15 marks so candidates were required to provide detailed response. Candidates generally recognised the role of the

Chair in introducing the meeting, keeping the meeting on track, managing engagement of the attendees and ensuring that everyone had appropriate paperwork but candidates often omitted to mention the need to summarise progress, ensure decisions were recorded and ensure that any actions were clearly assigned.

Question 9

The achievement of organisational objectives requires a plan. Explain the process for developing a plan and describe the content of an effective plan. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This was not a popular question and those candidates that did attempt the question often failed to demonstrate understanding of plans and the process of developing a plan.

Successful candidates wrote about issues such as purpose, relationship to organisational objectives, consulting with relevant colleagues/stakeholders, setting priorities, agreeing resources, carrying risk assessment, agreeing timelines, setting milestones, specifying outcomes, specifying quality standards etc. Less successful candidates wrote at length about SMART approaches without linking this clearly back to either the development of the plan or its content.

Question 10

You have been tasked with carrying out an investigation into a grievance case in another department which could not be resolved earlier in the process.

Explain the process you would follow in carrying out this investigation including the steps you would take to collect and validate information. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was about the process of investigation. Although it was not a popular option for candidates, those candidates who did choose to answer this question often presented good responses.

Responses should have covered the following steps:

- scoping and confirming limits of role/responsibilities
- researching background information
- identifying people to be interviewed or consulted
- carrying out interviews
- validating information
- producing a report

Some candidates focused on grievances and the grievance process in general rather than on the investigative process and therefore achieved few, if any, marks.