IFE Level 3 Diploma in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Unit 5 – Leadership and Management (Zone 2)

Examiner Report – March 2017

Introduction

Candidates performed less well on this paper than in previous years with only 32% of candidates attaining a pass. The subjects covered in the paper were standard subject areas and candidates preparing for the examination would have been able to access learning material in the downloadable IFE text book.

Some candidates failed to read the questions carefully. There were many examples of candidates basing their responses on only a single word or phrase used in the question rather than reading the question in full and taking into account the whole context

It often appeared as if candidates were regurgitating information that they had learned rather than attempting to apply their understanding within the context given in the question. This meant that candidates were often able to give brief lists but were then unable to explain underlying principles or the application (at organisation level) of the points that they had identified in their lists.

Candidates are advised to use the information about the number of marks allocated to each question as a guide when planning the depth of their response and managing their time. There were many examples of candidates writing at length where only a few marks were available and then providing only brief responses to questions that clearly required in-depth information.

Question 1

Describe the contribution which the following types of records can make to improving the management of health and safety in the workplace:

a) hazard identification/risk assessment records. (10 marks)

b) reports of accidents and near misses. (10 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question had particular relevance for candidates working in the fire sector but there were few high scoring responses.

Those candidates that attained high marks for part a) understood that the value of these records lies in areas such as ensuring that managers and employees are aware of hazards, establishing appropriate precautions, eliminating risk and supporting allocation of

appropriate resources etc. Some candidates focussed on "risk assessment" and wrote at length about the risk assessment process itself rather than providing an assessment of the contribution of these records as required by the question.

Candidates often provided a better response to part b) than to part a). Many were able to identify the value of these records in helping managers and employees understand how accidents did or could happen, identifying trends, identifying the need for equipment and training etc

Question 2

a) *Describe the benefits to an organisation of having a diverse workforce. (14 marks)*

b) *Describe the principles on which human resource policies should be based. (6 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

In response to part a), most candidates were able to identify some benefits. The types of benefits that could have been described included improved community relationships due to improved understanding of different needs and cultures, promoting a greater range of skills within the organisation, promoting creativity and innovation from different mind-sets and reducing staff turnover and recruitment costs.

Part b) was generally answered poorly as few candidates appeared to understand the importance of underpinning principles such as openness, treating staff fairly, making links to performance management and recognising the importance of the quality of working life.

Question 3

a) *Draw a diagram to illustrate the systematic training cycle. (4 marks)*

b) *Describe how the systematic training cycle can assist managers in identifying and addressing the training and development needs of their team. (16 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was one of the least popular options for candidates.

Most candidates were able to provide an accurate diagram as required by part a). However, part b) was often answered poorly with some candidates focussing on managers running training courses and other candidates providing only a few brief points.

Candidates who attained high marks for part b) were able to describe how the process enables manages to:

- take into account the different factors and situations which can be used to identify a training need, such as organisational policies and strategic objectives the need for the right staff with the right skills, organisational changes, staff aspirations;

- plan how the training should be provided and gain the support of senior managers;
- consider the best delivery methods such as secondments, projects, external courses;
- consider the best ways of evaluating the training, through staff acquiring new skills and improvement in team work.

Question 4

a) Describe the factors you would take into account when holding a briefing session for your team.   (16 marks)

b) Explain how you would you ensure that your team members have understood the information communicated. (4 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular option for candidates and was generally answered well.

Candidates generally performed better on part a) than on part b) although some candidates provided only brief responses which covered only a few points or contained only single words or short-phrases which were not expanded sufficiently to secure marks.

Responses to part b), which required candidates to reflect on the effectiveness of communication, were less well developed. Many candidates failed to identify that understanding can be assessed by asking questions, listening to questions asked, observing body language etc.

Question 5

Explain why each of the following is an important managerial skill:

i)   planning (7 marks)
ii)   Controlling (6 marks)
iii) organising   (7 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This was a popular option for candidates but few candidates gained high marks. Candidates were usually able to identify the importance of the skills but responses were often limited with few candidates going on to extend and explain points. Candidates should be aware that the marks allocated to a question provides an indication of the number of points that are expected in responses and that a question that asks for an "explanation" requires a considered review of the points made rather than a brief statement.

In responding to this question, candidates generally made only one or two points per skill area.   As a result, the average mark attained for this question was only 6 marks.

Question 6

a) *Explain how a manager can show their staff that they have trust in them. (4 marks)*

b) *Explain why confidentiality is important in developing trust between employees and their manager. (10 marks)*

c) *Describe the practical steps a manager can take to safeguard confidential information and discussions. (6 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular option for candidates and there were some excellent responses.

In response to part a), most candidates were able to identify that trust can be demonstrated by approaches such as empowerment, delegation, consultation and allocation of special Projects.

Part b) was less well answered as candidates often limited their answers to one or two brief statements rather than providing the explanations required and exploring issues such as preventing tensions and promoting openness that enables the discussion of both work and personal issues.

Part c) was generally answered well as candidates were usually able to identify steps such as ensuring conversations are not overheard, restricting access to information and using passwords for information stored on computers.

Question 7

a) *Explain why budgetary controls are important in a public service. (11 marks)*

b) *Explain, using examples, why organisations need both revenue and capital expenditure. (4 marks)*

c) *Describe the features of an effective budget. (5 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Responses to this question were mixed with some candidates providing excellent responses and others relying on generic information.

Responses to part a) often lacked sufficient detail and scope to attain high marks. Candidate often provided brief lists without attempting to explain the points that they were making. High marks were obtained where candidates explained the importance of issues such controlling limited resources to the best effect, ensuring transparency for audit purposes and for public accountability, underpinning effective organisation performance via management of resources in the most appropriate way etc

Part b) was often answered poorly as many candidates did not appear to understand that revenue relates to day to day expenditure and that capital is concerned with major areas of expenditure such as buildings and vehicle replacement

Candidates often provided only one or two points when responding to part c). Few candidates demonstrate sufficient breadth of understanding to attain full marks for this question.

Question 8

a) Explain the term "Management Information Systems" (MIS) and outline the MIS process. (6 marks)

b) Describe, including examples of different systems, how Management Information Systems can contribute to organisational effectiveness. (14 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was the least popular option for candidates.

Candidates who obtained a good mark for part a), were able to describe MISs and explain that an MIS system converts data from various sources to show if targets and objectives are being met.

Part b) required a considered response in relation to the contribution of MIS to effective organisation performance. Some candidates wrote just about the systems used by their fire service without taking an organisational view or making the link to effectiveness. This type of response did not attain marks as the purpose of the question was the assessment of effectiveness at organisation level. Candidates who attained marks referenced systems such as financial systems and database systems and explained how the outputs generated could be used to assist in measuring, monitoring and improving performance.