

IFE Level 3 Diploma in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Unit 5 – Leadership and Management (Zone 1)

Examiner Report – March 2017

Introduction

27% of candidates that attempted the paper attained 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 that candidates regurgitated information 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. Sometimes the lists provided did not match the requirements of the question.

Candidates often provided only brief responses. Candidates should be aware that the mark allocation provided on the question paper indicates the number of points that are required in order to attain full marks. Candidates often presented only a few points where the mark indication clearly identified that a high number of marks were available.

Candidates generally performed best on question 4 and least well on questions 5 and 6.

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) *Explain the purpose of each stage in a formal disciplinary procedure at work and describe the process at each stage. (13 marks)*
- b) *Explain how an investigation into a formal disciplinary case should be carried out to demonstrate fairness. (7 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

In response to part a), most candidates were able to state the stages and to provide one or two brief points in description. However, few candidates understood that the different stages are focussed on helping both staff and managers deal with a performance situation and that they demonstrate fairness; as a result, few candidates met the requirement to “explain the purpose” of each stage.

There were few good responses to part b). Few candidates focussed specifically on the “investigation” element of the process as required by the question. Candidates who attained marks identified issues such as the importance of the investigation being carried out by an independent manager, the investigation sticking to the facts and ensuring that there is evidence to support statements, the investigation engaging with all relevant witnesses from both sides, the maintenance of records and the adherence to written procedures throughout.

Question 3

One of the responsibilities of managers is to meet the training and development needs of their staff.

- a) *Describe the main considerations managers need to take into account when devising a training and development plan for a member of their team. (15 marks)*
- b) *Summarise the main benefits that training and development plans may have on team culture. (5 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular option for candidates. However, few candidates attained high marks as candidates generally failed to provide sufficient points/content to secure high mark.

Many candidates were able to identify at some least a few relevant considerations when responding to part a).

There were few good responses to part b) as few candidates were able to link individual training back to the team scenario. The types of points that could have been covered in responses included: staff feel valued which leads to increased likelihood of team member retention and greater continuity; improved motivation from a team member can have an effect on other team members; a learning culture can be developed where individuals can contribute with their skills and others can learn from them; teams become more effective which promotes better cohesion and better performance.

Question 4

a) Explain, with examples, how team briefings can enhance efficiency in the workplace. (15 marks)

b) Describe how team members can help to make a team briefing successful. (5 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular option for candidates and those candidates that attempted the question often attained their highest mark for the response to this question.

There were many good responses to part a) with candidates able to make links to issues such as standardised information, clarity around organisational objectives and enhanced communication, motivation and shared goals. Some candidates provided only brief lists and omitted to follow the instruction to “explain”. This limited the marks that they could attain.

Part b) was less well answered with many candidates unable to focus on the contribution of individuals. Candidates who were able to attain marks identified that individuals could participate fully in discussion, ask questions, share ideas and display positive behaviours.

Question 5

Describe the leadership skills which are important when major changes are being introduced within an organisation and explain how these skills would be used. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question provided the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate understanding of the way that leadership skills could be used in the context of change. Whilst candidates were often able to identify skills, few candidates provided explanations or demonstrated ability to apply their understanding to the situation. For example, it was common for candidates to identify “communication” but to omit to describe specific uses of the skill in the situation.

Candidates who provided only single words such “communication” did not attain any marks whereas those that went on to explain the point (eg ensuring that effective communication systems are in place to keep staff up to date would reassure staff, enhance engagement with changes and prevent rumours developing) were able to secure high marks.

Candidates often identified skills in motivation but few candidates explored the way that planning and organising skills could be used in the situation.

Question 6

Describe the ways in which managers can improve their personal effectiveness in order to maximise the contribution they make to the achievement of organisational objectives. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question provided the opportunity for candidates to explore all aspects of the manager's role in driving organisational effectiveness. Many candidates focussed only on training and CPD and enhanced personal skills. Whilst marks were obtained for these points, candidates often omitted to make the links back to ensuring that organisational objectives were understood, ensuring that priorities (for themselves and their team) were agreed and addressed (with actions taken to improve skills as needed) and ensuring that appropriate systems and processes were in place (with learning and discussions with others undertaken as needed).

Question 7

- a) Explain the benefits of developing productive working relationships with colleagues in your organisation and external partners. (8 marks)*
- b) Explain how productive working relationships between different parts of the same organisation and with external organisations can be developed and maintained. (12 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Candidates often provided some relevant points in response to part a). However, points were often presented only briefly and without the required explanation which limited the marks that could be attained. Some candidates concentrated only on their own workplace rather than demonstrating wider knowledge of partnerships in a business environment.

Part b) required candidates to give more details assessment as to how relationships could be developed and maintained. This element of the question followed on from part a). Responses were often poor and attracted only superficial statements such as "holding meetings" and "communication". Statements which were not substantiated with more detail (and the required explanation) did not attract marks.

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.