

IFE Level 4 Certificate in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Unit 5 – Leadership and Management

Examiner Report – March 2018

Introduction

Candidates generally performed well with 66% of candidates attaining a Pass. Many candidates performed above the basic level required to achieve a pass with over half of the candidates that passed the examination attaining either a B or a C grade.

Candidates generally performed well on all questions and no particular areas of weakness in terms of subject areas were noted. Candidates performed best on questions 1 and 2; they performed least well on question 6.

At level 4, candidates need to demonstrate that they understand why issues arise and can assess the effectiveness of different approaches and strategies. Some candidates pitched their responses at an inappropriate level. Instead of focussing on “why”, candidates often focussed on basic descriptions of “how” things happened eg by writing about the content of policies or training rather than focussing on why the policies were in place or why a particular training strategy was required.

Question 1

Organisational success depends upon an awareness of the common causes of organisational failure. Identify common causes of failure and explain why these factors affect organisational effectiveness. (20 marks)

Examiner feedback

This question was usually answered well. Most candidates were able to identify several different causes of failure although some candidates limited the marks that could be attained by providing only brief explanations. The most common issues identified by candidates were poor leadership, poor communications, poor control of finance and lack of performance management.

Candidates who scored high marks went beyond these factors and considered issues such as ineffective organisational structure, failure to make links between different parts of the business/projects/teams, inadequate decision making and failure to clarify priorities.

Question 2

“A manager needs to be flexible in his/her choice of leadership style in order to be effective”. Explain this statement using examples of different leadership styles to support your points. (20 marks)

Examiner feedback

Most candidates attained their highest mark for their response to this question.

The question provided candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of different management styles and to assess the effectiveness of different styles in different contexts.

High scoring candidates evaluated the factors affecting a manager’s choice of style such as the skill levels and experience of the team, the work involved (routine/new/creative), the organisational environment (eg stable/conservative, traditional, radically changing, fighting for survival, adventurous), the preferred style of the manager, the experience level of the manager and the organisational culture and the importance placed on good staff relationships.

Candidates who attained lower marks wrote at length about different management styles without committing sufficient time to assessing the occasions when these styles would be effective or to evaluating the contribution of management style to effective delivery of goals.

Some candidates confused different styles eg it was common to confuse democratic with autocratic management.

Question 3

Describe the role of human resource policies and procedures in the achievement of strategic objectives and promotion of good employee relationships. (20 marks)

Examiner feedback

Candidates who appreciated that the question was about the “role” of human resources policies rather than the content of such policies correctly focused their responses on the reason for having policies in the first place and how the policies contributed to a positive organisational culture and organisational effectiveness. These candidates attained high marks.

Less successful candidates described procedures, particularly discipline and grievance procedures, without linking them back to their role in promoting good employee relationships.

Examples of points which could have been raised include:

- Human resource policies set out the way in which an organisation intends to manage its employees and in doing so they define the philosophy and values of the organisation.
- If used in a positive way human resource policies can make staff feel valued.

- Human resource policies demonstrate a commitment to the achievement of equality and can let staff know that there is no place for favouritism or prejudice.
- Human resource policies help to ensure that all staff members are treated fairly and equally.
- Human resource policies facilitate decentralisation and delegation so that line managers have a role and feel trusted and valued.
- Human resource policies ensure that when dealing with matters concerning people an approach in line with corporate values is adopted throughout the organisation so that staff members feel fairly treated.
- Human resource policies are often developed in conjunction with trade unions, representative bodies and joint consultative committees and so represent the workforce contributing to policy development and are an important part of the development of good employee relations.

Question 4

- a) *Explain why effective budgetary planning and control is essential for the achievement of strategic objectives. (14 marks)*
- b) *Describe the challenges that an organisation faces in implementing effective budgetary controls. (6 marks)*

Examiner feedback

This was the least popular question on the paper.

Candidates that selected this question often provided only brief responses to part a) and did not explore the points that they raised in detail. At Level 4, candidates are required to demonstrate that they understand how issues link together in affecting business performance. Candidates often identified an issue without expanding on the knock-on effects.

Part b) was often answered well with many candidates demonstrating good understanding of the dynamics of working with colleagues and of managing resources in a changing business environment.

Question 5

Explain why taking into account task, team and individual needs can help achieve organisational objectives. (20 marks)

Examiner feedback

Many candidates provided good responses to this question and were able to explain how task, team and individual needs ought to be considered in achieving organisational objectives.

Successful candidates demonstrated a clear understanding that to be truly successful managers must balance all three aspects to not only complete the task but also build effective teams and develop their individual employees.

Question 6

Explain why the identification of training, learning and development needs at different levels are important aspects of effective organisations. (20 marks)

Examiner feedback

Candidates who took an organisation-wide approach and considered the different types of training needed by individuals in different roles in the organisation and in different places in their career were able to attain high marks. Successful candidates recognised that senior managers needed to continue learning in order to ensure that the business kept up with the changing environment and that organisations needed to ensure that all staff were competent in current roles whilst also ensuring that succession plans were in place to develop the managers and leaders of the future.

Some candidates provided extensive irrelevant information. It was common for less successful candidates to focus on “identification” of training needs and to write at length about training needs analysis and training cycles. This information was unnecessary and did not secure marks as it did not focus on “why” an organisation needed all of its staff to be continuously learning and improving.

Question 7

Explain why effective managers need to recognise the importance of downwards, upwards and lateral communication. (20 marks)

Examiner feedback

Less successful candidates described the different types of communication at length rather than applying their understanding to explain why each was needed.

Candidates were often able to explain the importance of downwards and upwards communication and to illustrate their points with examples of the consequences of poor communication. However, few responses scored high marks in relation to lateral communication and it appeared that this type of communication was less well understood. Candidates should be aware that:

Lateral communication

- recognises the interconnectedness between different parts of an organisation and that the work of one part will affect the work of another.
- can ensure joined-up thinking and therefore more efficient working across teams.

- can help to provide a better understanding of the issues and problems of colleagues and therefore help to prevent the development of rivalries.
- can help prevent the development of the silo mentalities which have a negative effect on the operation of an organisation.
- can promote good partnership working and problem solving by bringing together staff with different knowledge and skills.

Question 8

- a) *Explain why the success of many fire and rescue service initiatives often depends upon the development of partnerships with various public and private sector organisations. (13 marks)*
- b) *Explain how senior managers can contribute to the development of successful partnerships with external organisations. (7 marks)*

Examiner feedback

Part a) of the question was generally poorly answered with few candidates able to provide more than a few points about successful partnership working. Candidates often identified the benefit of a partnership (for example in relation to shared resources, ways to reach different parts of the community and joint learning opportunities) but few provided sufficient depth or exploration of the points to attain high marks.

Responses to part b) were often better than responses to part a). Candidates often recognised key contributions such as commitment to meetings, public commitment to the partnership and sharing of relevant information. Few candidates, however, considered more detailed issues such as sharing of objectives and joint planning. As in previous responses, the lack of scope and detail provided often meant that only a few tangible points were made and therefore the marks awarded were limited.