IFE Level 3 Diploma in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Unit 5 – Leadership and Management

Examiner Report – March 2016

Introduction

Candidates performed less well than in 2015 with only 47% of candidates that attempted the paper in March 2016 achieving a Pass grade. Many candidates appeared to have sat the examination without undertaking adequate preparation. The majority of candidates who achieved Pass grades, achieved grade D passes; few candidates attained very high marks and few achieved grade A or grade B.

Some candidates appeared to mis-read questions and/or to focus on only a word or phrase within the question; this meant that there were many examples of responses that did not address the specific question asked.

A number of candidates wasted valuable time by writing lengthy introductions to subjects rather than concentrating on the needs of the question.

Question 1

Describe the possible barriers to effective communication between individuals within an organisation. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular choice for candidates. However, the average mark achieved for responses to this question was only 7.

Candidates often omitted to "describe" the barriers and provided insufficient information to obtain marks. Many candidates repeated the same points many times in their response, simply phrasing the same issues in different ways.

Candidates who scored high marks provided considered answers that explored a range of barriers such as those presented by the environment (eg noise, physical distractions), ways of expressing information (eg jargon, language, complexity, sufficiency of information) and existing relationships (eg hierarchy, silo working arrangements, poor working relationships) etc.

Question 2

a) *Describe ten possible causes of conflict in the workplace. (10 marks)*

b) *Explain the negative effects on an organisation of unresolved conflict. (10 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular choice for candidates and most candidates who attempted this question achieved a good mark.

Many candidates achieved all ten of the marks available for part a). Candidates who achieved high marks clearly identified ten possible causes of conflict such as personality clashes, poor working environment, stress or personal problems, poor line management, lack of role clarity etc.

Part b) was less well answered but most candidates were able to identify at least a few of the negative effects on an organisation of unresolved conflict such as loss of time due to time being spent on resolving issues instead of ensuring that goals and targets are met, the potential to lose customers, the negative effect on motivation and team working and absenteeism/loss of skilled staff etc.

Less successful candidates tended to write from their own perspective rather than taking a wider view. They often failed to assess and explain the impact on the organisation.

Question 3

a) *Explain why the concept of continuing professional development (CPD) is important to a professional. (10 marks)*

b) *Describe the characteristics of an effective personal development plan. (10 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Candidates who attempted this question often failed to achieve high marks.

Few candidates were able to explain in detail why CPD is important. Many candidates restricted their answers to explaining the link between skills and financial return. Key points that could have been made include: a professional accepts the need for lifelong learning; CPD enables strengths and weaknesses to be identified; CPD enables existing skill levels to be maintained; CPD enables sound judgements to be made; CPD enables a professional to keep up to date with sector/technological/best practice developments etc.

Many candidates failed to appreciate that the question asked for "characteristics" of a personal development plan and simply listed subject areas for training or types of training rather than focussing on characteristics of the plan. Examples of characteristics that could have been cited include: provides an outline of activities to be undertaken; identifies improvement areas; sets SMART targets; includes the outcome from appraisals; includes a review and evaluation process.

Question 4

Managers are required to make effective decisions as part of their day-to-day responsibilities.
a) *Describe the different levels of decision-making in an organisation.   (3 marks)*

b) *Explain the term "centralised approach" in the context of decision-making. (2 marks)*

c) *Describe five benefits of centralised decision-making. (5 marks)*

d) *Draw a diagram of the decision-making sequence. (4 marks)*

e) *Apply the decision-making sequence to a situation within your own workplace. (6 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

In response to part a), some candidates did not recognise that the three levels of decision making are strategic, departmental and team.

Most candidates were able to explain the concept of centralised decision making and to describe the benefits.

Many candidates provided a clear and appropriate diagram in response to part d).

The least well answered section of the question was part (e). Those candidates who applied the decision making cycle to a situation within their own workplace and provided considered examples to show the process being applied achieved high marks. However, many candidates simply described the stages shown in their diagram and omitted to apply the process as required.

Question 5

a) *Explain how effective records can help a manager in their day-to-day work. (14 marks)*

b) *Describe the characteristics of an effective record-keeping system. (6 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Those candidates that achieved high marks for this question were able to explain how effective records allow managers to make decisions based on facts, monitor performance, highlight problems, identify resource needs, measure productivity, monitor absenteeism and turnover, identify training needs, comply with legislation and ensure good Health and Safety practices. Less successful candidates identified only a few points and/or failed to back the points up with sufficient explanation.

Most candidates were able to identify one or more of the following characteristics: accurate, accessible, linked to processes, adaptable, economical, complied with legislation and cover all organisational activities. However, some candidates restricted their answers to lists and omitted to include the description as required by the question.

Question 6
Effective health and safety involves both employer and employee duties.

a) *Describe an employer's duties in relation to health and safety. (10 marks)*

b) *Describe an employee's duties in relation to health and safety. (5 marks)*

c) *Describe the stages in the safety precedence procedure. (2 marks)*

d) *Explain the safe person concept. (3 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This was a popular question. Although some candidates achieved high marks for their response to the question, a high number of candidates failed to demonstrate understanding of health and safety responsibilities and attained fewer than 8 marks.

Some candidates failed to provide enough information to meet the requirements of part (a) and part (b). Candidates sometimes provided lists of points (without the required description) and sometimes the same point was repeated several times.

Examples of employer responsibilities that could have been cited in response to part a) include: provide a clear health and safety policy which is brought to the attention of all staff; maintain a safe workplace; ensure that systems are in place to identify risks and hazards and to report accidents and near misses; prevent risks from use of any equipment, substance and from exposure to harmful substances; ensure there is no improper conduct or behaviour which is likely to put the safety, health and welfare of employees at risk; provide instruction and training to employees on health and safety; provide protective clothing and equipment to employees etc.

Examples of employee responsibilities that could have been cited in response to part b) include: take reasonable care to protect the health and safety of themselves and of other people in the workplace; do not engage in improper behaviour that will endanger themselves or others; make sure they are not under the influence of drink or drugs in the workplace; undergo any reasonable medical or other assessment if requested to do so by the employer; report any defects in the place of work or any equipment which might be a danger to health and safety etc.

Many candidates appeared to have no knowledge of the Safety Precedent Procedure or the Safe Person Concept. Candidates often described stages in a risk assessment or made sweeping statements about the importance of safety. Again a number of candidates used only their day to day knowledge, rather than taking the broader view required by the question.

Question 7

Organisations are more successful when team members trust their managers. Describe how a manager can develop the trust of their team members. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This was a popular option for candidates.

Many candidates were able to identify relevant strategies. However, candidates often provided only superficial lists and responses often included repetition of the same points.

Some candidates quoted Maslow at great length but did not explain how the theory applied to the question.

Question 8

a) *Draw a diagram to illustrate the performance management process. (3 marks)*

b) *Explain how the performance management process can contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives. (17 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was the least popular option for candidates. Those candidates that did answer the question often attained only low marks.

A common error in response to part b) was to answer the question from the perspective of the individual rather than from the perspective of the organisation. Examples of the points

that could have been made include: promotes the concept of continuous improvement across the organisation; acts as a lever for change so that the organisation can survive and prosper; enables expectations to be defined so that employees know what doing a good job means; enables employees and their work to be evaluated both informally and formally; increases the motivation and commitment of employees, by enabling them to recognise how they contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives; enables individuals to develop their abilities, increase their job satisfaction and achieve their full potential to their own benefit and that of the organisations as a whole; enables the setting of SMART targets; identifies the resources needed to meet organisational objectives etc.

Question 9

Explain, using examples, why some organisations use a SWOT analysis as part of the process of developing their strategic plan. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Most candidates were able to describe a SWOT analysis and to give appropriate examples of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Many candidates provided very long lists of examples of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

However, few candidates explained the role of a strategic plan or provided considered explanations as to how the SWOT analysis contributes to the development of strategic plan and/or to determining actions to improve organisation performance/opportunities.

Question 10

a) *Explain the importance of human resource planning to an organisation. (5 marks)*

b) *Describe the factors that organisations need to take into account as part of their human resource planning process. (15 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was not a popular choice for candidates. Those candidates who attempted the question generally achieved low marks; the average mark attained was 5.

Many of the candidates that attempted the question misread the question and wrote about human resource policies, such as recruitment and selection, equality, discipline etc. Several wrote at length about stages in the recruitment process and the role of human resource teams in recruiting new staff.

Responses to part a), were often quite brief with few candidates identifying key points such as the fact that Human Resource Planning is concerned with having the right people, with the right skills, in the right place in order to implement organisational strategies and achieve organisational objectives.

Factors taken into account that could have been included in response to part b) include: size and complexity of the organisation; number and types of staff needed; staff turnover within the organisation; succession planning arrangements; guidance, encouragement and support given to staff to enable them to fulfil their potential within the organisation; any plans to change the culture of the organisation; the time it could take staff to acquire the necessary skills; ways of reducing the size of the workforce.