

Examiners' Report

Summer 2012

Principal Learning Public Services
PS201

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Unit PS201

Exploring Public Services

This was the fourth time external assessment was available for Level 2 Principal Learning in Public Services. This paper was supported by pre-release material to set a context for questions in Section A. For this series the pre-release material was based on the work of NACRO.

The questions in Section B are not directly linked to the pre-release, but learners can use their research to support Section B responses and in this series many did use their research in responses to Section B.

It was observed that some centres may not be thoroughly delivering the whole of the 'what you need to learn' content as basic public services terms such as statutory and non statutory services were often not understood by learners and some learners were not able to distinguish between the role and funding of public, private and third sector organisations. A clear understanding of the different sectors, their roles and funding is critical to the understanding of both this unit and the whole of the Principal Learning Public Services at Level 2. It is also important that learners understand the differences between the raising of funds (funding sources) and the allocation of funds (funding distribution).

Most candidates provided only basic responses to Section A questions and they often repeated the same examples from the case study in other questions (in particular Questions 2(a), 2(b) and 3) without showing any further understanding.

In Question 2 it was expected that for full marks learners should have shown a full understanding and ability to explain what a statutory service is and support this with an example.

In Question 5 learners needed to have a clear appreciation of the issues related to reallocating funds from custodial to community sentencing and in Question 6 they needed to be able to explain the impact of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act.

Learners answering Question 8 were required to have a full appreciation of the costs and benefits of the use of volunteers for delivery of public services.

For Question 9 learners tended to provide a basic list of alternative funding sources but often there was little attempt to link to funding of Higher Education. They needed to provide a comprehensive list of alternative funding closely linked to the question context to get the higher marks in this question.

Whilst in Question 10 very few learners discussed both positive and negative potential effects.

It was clear from candidate responses that many learners did not understand what organisations are involved in crime prevention and community sentencing, despite this being the focus of the pre-release materials. Some candidates showed very little understanding of the involvement of the third sector in offender management at all and especially how this had developed over time. For Questions 5, 6, 8 and 9 in particular some candidates were able only to put forward simple responses with little understanding of looking at all aspects of the scenario presented or any real attempt to respond to the operative (command) verbs in the various questions.

Recommendations

Where the pre-release had been used effectively to prepare learners for the examination, the outcomes were much better (both in terms of an ability to use research based on pre release materials well and also the ability to answer all questions set). The pre-release materials are posted on the Principal Learning Public Services section of the Edexcel website six weeks prior to the examination date. It is vital that these are downloaded as soon as they are available and used to help prepare learners for the examination.

The Tutor Support Material (TSM) are available for every Unit and provides detailed guidance for delivery. It can be downloaded at <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/diploma/publicservice/Pages/default.aspx>

Learners need to make sure they have read question in full, so they can address it and provide relevant examples to support their ideas.

Learners in often did not ensure responses (especially for the extended writing questions) focused on the command verbs in the questions. So learners should be made aware of the meaning of the command verbs that appear in the assessment criteria for this Unit ie outline, explain, identify, describe, analyse, and propose. They also need to be aware of the importance of these command verbs in the examination questions. Definitions of these words are given in the Unit specification and learners should answer questions with these definitions in mind.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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