

## Level 3 Certificate in Public Relations



International  
Qualifications from EDI

Annual Qualification Review

2010

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## INTRODUCTION

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The annual qualification review provides qualification-specific support and guidance to centres. This information is designed to help teachers preparing to teach the subject and to help candidates preparing to take the examination.

The reviews are published in September and take into account candidate performance, demonstrated in both on demand and series examinations, over the preceding 12 months. Global pass rates are published so you can measure the performance of your centre against these.

The review identifies candidate strengths and weaknesses by syllabus topic area and provides examples of good and poorer candidate responses. It should therefore be read in conjunction with details of the structure and learning objectives contained within the syllabus for this qualification found on the website.

The review also identifies any actual or proposed changes to the syllabus or question types together with their implications.

### PASS RATE STATISTICS

The following statistics are based on the performance of candidates who took this qualification between 1 October 2009 and 31 August 2010.

Global pass rate            51.82%

#### Grade distributions

Pass                            47.61%

Credit                         43.86%

Distinction                 8.53%

### General Comments from Chief Examiner:

It is very pleasing to see a significant improvement in papers from various centres, which I feel can be directly attributed to the release of training DVD's prepared by Education Development International in December of 2008. During 2009 and 2010 EDI have continued to develop teaching and learning materials for the use of centres, tutors and students alike. EDI has also produced Internet podcasts which are available for the use of tutors and students.

With the introduction of the new syllabus and examination format which went into full operation with series 2-2010, this report will only focus on the new syllabus and examinations commencing with the new format from series 2-2010

### CENTRES AND TUTORS SHOULD NOTE:

Under the new examination format examiners will ONLY MARK THE FIRST 3 ANSWERS FROM SECTION B.

If a student does not answer any questions from section A they have automatically lost 40 marks or if they only answer 1 question from section A they have lost 20 marks automatically.

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## **GENERAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

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### **Strengths**

- the majority of candidates are now presenting their answers in the format required by the question
- distinct improvement of the information offered by candidates in their answers
- the compulsory question relating to a news release continues to see improvement in respect of layout for a press release and the quality of information presented, written in the appropriate style.

### **Weaknesses**

- it is obvious that in some centres insufficient attention is being given to the other compulsory question relating to the 6 point public relations plan as whole batches of students from such centres produce very poor answers, scoring low marks
- candidates continually fail to read the question set
- a number of candidates fail to produce a report or memo format when asked for
- many candidates offer answers totally disproportionate to the marks available
- lack of planning in answers
- repeated failure to provide examples or offering marketing examples instead of PR
- poor handwriting resulting in sections (sometimes all) of a paper not being marked and zero marks being awarded

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## TEACHING POINTS BY SYLLABUS TOPIC

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### General Note applicable to all Syllabus Topics:

Many questions in an examination paper ask for suitable examples to be provided to illustrate a candidate's full understanding of the topic being examined. In numerous cases examples offered frequently have no relation to the subject of the question or examples are completely ignored. Tutors must ensure that candidates are given relevant examples or are made to provide their own examples to highlight the relevant topics as required during the course of their studies.

### Syllabus Topic 1 The Nature of Public Relations

Many candidates can offer a suitable definition of Public Relations but have no idea of exactly what the definition means when asked to explain how it is applied. When asked to explain the differences between advertising, marketing and public relations many candidates fail to realise that in fact all three are connected and integrated.

A clear understanding of each is required, especially when candidates may already be studying all three subjects.

Candidates should be able to draw relevant diagrams to illustrate an "in-house" and an "external" public relations department and be able to offer suitable explanations of the roles for each member of the relevant department.

Candidates frequently are confused between the "advantages" and the "roles" of in-house or external public relations departments and it is essential they know the differences. Questions relating to the roles or activities of an external public relations department invariably exclude any form of media activity. It is amazing how many candidates either do not read or understand this statement in the question, offering a full range of media activities in their answers, scoring no marks.

How to choose an appropriate external public relations consultancy, questions to ask, elements to consider or evidence to seek is important as are the methods used to pay external consultancies.

Candidates need to fully understand the role of public relations in the times of crisis. There is a very definitive list of procedures that should be carried out and actions that should be avoided. Candidates need to be aware of the difference between a crisis, crisis management and crisis public relations. Very frequently candidates offer answers that relate to crisis management and **NOT** crisis public relations. Crisis public relations is about protecting the company's image, reputation and status and is **NOT** about calling the fire brigade, repairing the damage to the factory or engaging a salvage team.

The role of public relations in respect of financial and parliamentary public relations needs to be explained - but these are topics that normally warrant 2 to 5 marks in any paper.

## EXAMINATION FEEDBACK:

- many students do not understand the difference between crisis management and crisis public relations. The two activities are quite different. Crisis public relations is for a specific purpose and has defined actions that relate only to public relations and not crisis management
- students need to fully understand the specific roles of public relations in relation to:
  - financial public relations, what they do, who do they communicate with
  - parliamentary public relations, why it is carried out
  - non-profit organisations, frequently public relations is the major activity of such. Again what do they do, why do they do it, to whom do the communicate
- students need to know and be able to explain a wide variety of activities that an external public relations consultancy can perform. Questions invariably exclude **ANY FORM OF MEDIA** activity and yet students continue to include news releases, press receptions etc in their answers
- Students need to be aware of the role of public relations as an integrated part of a marketing communications campaign. Students need to be able to demonstrate with examples of how public relations activities may be used.

## Syllabus Topic 2 The Publics of Public Relations

Many candidates are confused between "generic publics" and examples of publics. A generic public could be - the community, suppliers or employees and the examples would be - those people living in the local area, organisations that provide food or teachers, doctors etc. Candidates lose marks in papers by offering examples instead of generics, or offering generics without examples.

Candidates need to fully understand the difference between a segment and publics and likewise what is meant by a target audience in relation to public relations. Frequently candidates offer answers that relate to marketing or advertising concepts and not public relations.

Candidates need to be able to offer a correctly labelled diagram to illustrate the communication process and to explain what is meant by noise in the communication process with suitable examples of such. The importance of feedback in the communication process must also be explained.

Students should fully understand the analytical tools of STEEPLE and SWOT and be able to apply them to a given scenario. It is insufficient for a student to simply state the tools and the elements they consist of and the questions they ask. Students **HAVE TO** be able to **APPLY** the tools as indeed they would have to in the professional working environment.

## EXAMINATION FEEDBACK:

- when asked to give the publics for any type of organisation many students simply give either the generic public or an example of such – both are needed to score marks
- many students give multiple examples of the same public
- diagrams representing the communication process frequently omit encoding and decoding in the process and many omit the influence of noise
- many examples of noise consist of physical noise only such as background noise, phones ringing, people shouting. Students need to be aware of the numerous other examples of noise – which is defined as ANYTHING that can interfere with the communication process.

## Syllabus Topic 3 Law and Voluntary Codes

For several years this topic has been relegated to a maximum of a 5 mark question and invariably requires candidates to explain the difference between a "code of conduct" and "statutory legislation".

Many candidates continue to believe that a code of conduct is a set of rules imposed by an organisation to control how their employees will behave and perform their duties. Where as it is a voluntary code agreed by members of a professional body as to standards required by their profession.

## EXAMINATION FEEDBACK

- many students still refer to a code of conduct as something imposed or introduced by an organisation to control the activities or behaviour of their employees. **THIS IS WRONG** these are terms and conditions of employment – **NOT A CODE OF CONDUCT**
- code of conduct applies only to professional or trade organisations. They are introduced by the professional or trade body to impose standards on members to prevent government legislation being applied.

## Syllabus Topics 4 International Public Relations

Carrying out research in some developing nations (owing to size, literacy and cultural differences) can still present difficulties for public relations practitioners. Students need to be able to identify and explain such difficulties and how they may be overcome.

In most papers there will be a question relating to public relations in developing countries. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century many developing nations now have access to a number of media technologies available in developed nations however questions will invariably preclude electronic and printed media.

Candidates need to consider the implications of a developing nation (or a specific region of a developing nation) for public relations. It cannot be automatically assumed that electricity is in ample supply, that all publics are educated and literate, that everyone speaks the same language and have the same culture and beliefs. Nor can it be assumed that there is a large variety of media, that all media are free from any form of state interference and the media has national distribution. All of these elements will have considerable influence on the ability to carry out a public relations campaign and the methods that will have to be employed and need to be considered when contemplating a campaign in a developing nation.

Candidates are frequently asked to **"EVALUATE"** a campaign that has been carried out in a developing nation. Many candidates either fail to read the question or simply do not know the difference between how to carry out a campaign and how to evaluate one. Many candidates offer answers that describe the steps they would take to carry out a campaign (similar to media/media techniques required in the 6 point plan) and offer no answers as to how they could or would measure the success (or failure) of such a campaign. As a result candidates invariably score no marks for this question. Similarly candidates either do not have the imagination or knowledge to offer a variety of measures available to evaluate a campaign and simply offer numerous examples of primary research such as focus groups, consumer panels, questionnaires, telephone research and face to face research etc.

## EXAMINATION FEEDBACK:

- many students when asked to evaluate the success of a campaign in a developing nation are still explaining how to carry out the campaign and **NOT** how to evaluate it
- many students offer multiple answers for the same topic e.g. carry out questionnaire research, followed by face-to-face research, telephone research, door-to-door research, ad-hoc research and continuous research. All the additional answers score **ZERO** marks.

## Syllabus Topic 5 Community Relations

Every paper invariably has a question connected with this syllabus topic. Candidates need to understand that community relations relates to the **"LOCAL"** community and not the community per se. Only the largest of organisations can have a national community relations policy and this comes under the heading of Corporate Social Responsibility and **NOT** community relations.

Candidates need to understand the reasons for an organisation having a community relations policy and what the objectives of such a policy are - they do have specific aims other than to be simply seen as a "good neighbour" or an "institutional philanthropist".

Candidates need to have a good knowledge of numerous activities an organisation could carry out in such community relations policy. Many candidates simply offer several examples of sponsorship in their answers (which are not marked). Similarly some candidates offer the full range of media activities from press releases, to press conferences and facility visits as their answers - all of which attract minimal

marks. It is essential that candidates understand exactly what secondment of staff (it is not employing local people) - amateur media support (it is not printing magazines for the community) - exhibitions (not displaying their own goods) - a facility visit is for the media (not the local community).

When offering answers relating to infrastructure development - no organisation can afford to build a motorway, an airport or a hospital - answers **HAVE TO BE** realistic. In future such answers as "build hospitals, roads, motorways, public libraries, dams electricity stations **"WILL NOT BE ACCEPTABLE"** for reasons already given.

### **EXAMINATION FEEDBACK:**

- it is very obvious that many students learn the various community relations activities but have no idea what they mean or relate to
- students suggest that staff secondment means recruiting from the locality, that amateur media support means donating money to advertise in the press, that facility visits are open days for the local community
- an organisation that has only \$12,000 to spend on community relations could never build a hospital, library or school.

### **Syllabus Topic 6 A Public Relations Campaign**

**This topic is NOW A COMPULSORY QUESTION in every examination paper**, and requires that a student prepares a public relations campaign - using the 6 point planning model. The major fault that many candidates make is they totally forget that they should be planning a public relations campaign. Candidates when they are informed of no media in a region devote the entire plan towards establishing media in a region and lose sight of the question. A campaign to prevent a school or hospital from closing because of lack of funds often results in a 6 point plan concerned solely with:

- building new classrooms/wards
- recruiting more teachers/doctors
- providing more books and facilities/introducing new treatments.

None of these answers have any relevance to a public relations campaign and always score no marks.

When assessing the situation - frequently candidates will offer a 2 or 3 page SWOT or STEEPLE analysis which is totally irrelevant to the question. Similarly they will completely digress from the question for example a question states "--- a small school faces closure due to lack of funds, there are no media facilities----". Candidates will offer answers such as:

- there are no roads leading to the school
- there are no medical facilities in the region
- people cannot afford to pay for education
- there is a civil war in the region
- there are many orphans with no one to help them.

Very often having made this assessment the remainder of the plan is focussed on the situation they have described and has no relation to the question set.

Candidates frequently supply a list of one word answers for publics instead of stating who they are and why they are important - scoring minimal marks.

Single word lists of media techniques are another feature - instead of explaining the technique and who it would be directed at - again scoring minimal marks.

Despite a question stating there is no electronic or printed media in a region - answers frequently refer to press releases, press conferences, media interviews, television documentaries as media techniques.

When offering a budget candidates invariably refer to elements that have no relation to the media techniques adopted.

Tutors should have candidates frequently practice preparing **RELEVANT** campaign plans for a variety of scenarios, ensuring that they remain completely concentrated on the **PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN**

and do not digress or diverge from this and that each stage of the 6 point plan is completed correctly and fully.

## **EXAMINATION FEEDBACK:**

- students still continue to offer 6 point plans totally unconnected to the subject of the question
- students simply provide lists in the various sections without any explanations, scoring minimal marks
- some students simply provide theory and explain what the 6 point plan is and what it covers **WITHOUT** any application to a plan as required by the question
- students provide answers in essay format and not the requested bullet point format. In future these answers will be penalised.

## **Syllabus Topic 7 Working with the Media**

**EDI publish on the Internet an excellent podcast for writing the perfect news release. It is strongly recommended that students (and tutors) access this podcast.**

A compulsory question is always set from this syllabus topic - namely the press release.

It is a fact that many candidates either present a press release in the correct layout and score very good marks or have no real idea of the layout and score minimal marks - it is rare that a candidate gets it partly right. This is possibly the fault of tutors who either teach the correct method, or do not teach it at all.

Candidates need plenty of practice at preparing a news release for many different scenarios. The cardinal rules being that the 5 W's and the 1 H of a news release should appear in the first two paragraphs of the release. The remainder of the release should consist of qualifying information **RELEVANT** to the question set.

In any press release question it is stated that candidates can add other relevant information or details of their own. The emphasis is relevant information. Frequently candidates diverge into advertising puffery, marketing strategy or indeed pure fantasy in some of their answers.

Many candidates use the first person in their release with frequent reference to " my - our - we - I ". This can cost them 3 marks in relation to the style of the release. Many press releases are presented in the form of essays or letters, with no clear spacing between paragraphs again losing style marks.

Candidates need to fully understand the differences between a press conference and a press reception. Not only the operational differences but who the likely participants would be in each case and for what purposes they are used.

Candidates should practice the arrangements, requirements and sequence of events (with the appropriate timetable) needed in preparing for a press conference and a facility visit from the original idea through to the final evaluation after the event.

Many candidates seem to think that a facility visit is an open house affair for all and sundry that the organisation wishes to invite. Publics, school visits, shareholders, major customers are frequent answers - all of course are wrong. A facility visit is purely for the media.

A press pack is not a bag full of pens, pencils and notebooks, sandwiches etc that a reporter uses in his job as often described by candidates. It is a folder with the organisation's name (and possibly their logo) which contains useful information for the media, such as photographs, background information, a copy of a press release etc. This is issued to the press at a press function such as a conference or facility visit.

Media relations is a deliberate and planned series of activities carried out by a public relations officer to maintain the friendship and goodwill of media outlets and tutors should ensure these are fully understood. They are not relatives that work for a newspaper as often suggested.

## **EXAMINATION FEEDBACK:**

- some students still do not know the layout for a press release (are they being taught it by the tutor I have to ask)
- students still present the body of their press release in essay format instead of short 3 or 4 line paragraphs with a blank line between each paragraph (losing marks).
- students writing irrelevant information simply to fill out their release or worse still inserting advertising copy into their release. It is better to be under the word limit than to try and struggle to reach it with irrelevant nonsense
- when arranging a press reception or facility visit many students can provide a relevant number of actions, however, they are totally illogical and completely out of the correct sequence that should be followed.

## **Syllabus Topic 8 Exhibitions**

Candidates need to fully understand the difference between a consumer and a trade exhibition. To be aware of different types of exhibitions including EXPO's, International and travelling exhibitions.

Candidates should practice preparing for an exhibition from the original idea through to final evaluation. From how to evaluate which exhibition(s) to attend, all the various stages of preparation, the physical requirements for a display stand, the need for promotional and printed materials, staffing and attendance at the exhibition, liaison with the relevant media and the final assessment of the exhibitions success (or not).

## **Syllabus 9 Sponsorship**

Candidates should be able to offer an accurate definition of sponsorship, realising that is not simply a matter of financial support alone and to be able to supply at least 6 different types of sponsorship in the modern commercial world.

A knowledge of the 7 step sponsorship model is needed with the ability to provide suitable examples at every stage of the model.

Candidates need to understand the difference between the reasons an organisation might engage in sponsorship and the objectives in carrying out a sponsorship activity.

## **Syllabus Topic 10 Research**

An important syllabus topic that usually appears as a 20 mark question (sub-divided into sections of 4 or 5 marks each).

Candidates need to know what the following types of research are and when they are likely to be used. Quantitative and qualitative research, primary and secondary research. A knowledge of ad-hoc, omnibus and tracking study research is also required with the ability to supply **PUBLIC RELATIONS** examples as opposed to marketing examples.

Students need to know the 5-step method of research from the concept to the finalised results.

Students need to know what is meant by CATS and the elements it covers with regards to research.

## **Syllabus Topics 11 Technology and the Internet**

**This syllabus topic is covered extensively in the Teacher's Resource Pack for Public Relations – available FREE of charge from EDI Plc.**

Students need to be able to identify and explain how modern technology has had an impact on public relations. It is important that students remember it is the impact on public relations that is required **NOT** the impact on marketing, advertising, retailing or society in general.

Students need to explain desk top publishing (DTP) and be able to provide relevant examples of DTP in use whether it used for internal or external purposes. The use of Power Point ® and other electronic presentational and communicational tools such as video-conferencing and closed circuit television must be understood.

Students need to fully understand the difference between the Internet, the World Wide Web (WWW), a website and a webpage. A knowledge of how the Internet has impacted up on public relations and the uses of the Internet for, and by, public relations practitioners is now essential learning in this topic.

Whilst students will never be asked to design a public relations website/webpage(s) it is essential that a student can identify and explain some of the elements (at least 6 out of 10) that would or should be included in such a website/webpage(s)

Students should be aware of the different format and layout that is adopted and used for preparing a news release via the Internet compared to a conventional news release issued to the media.

### **EXAMINATION FEEDBACK:**

- students frequently offer marketing or advertising answers when answering questions about the use of the Internet for public relations.

## **Syllabus Topic 12 Public Relations Miscellaneous**

Candidates need to fully understand what is meant by a house journal, a corporate brochure, an annual report and educational literature. They need to know the likely contents of each, to whom they are targeted and the likely format they would be prepared and presented in.

Students should be able to identify, explain and select the most relevant means of communication within an organisation for a specific scenario.

Students need to be familiar with all aspects of working with and selecting photographers for public relations purposes.

- identifying and explaining categories of photographers
- identifying and explaining photographic opportunities or events
- explaining the various elements required when briefing a photographer
- explaining a photo-caption.

### **EXAMINATION FEEDBACK:**

- corporate brochures are not booklets, newspapers or leaflets issued by an organisation
- an annual report is a lot more than “a report that is prepared every year”.

## **Syllabus Topic 13 Professional Development**

This is a new topic in the syllabus and accordingly extensive teaching notes, information and guidance is available in the tutors RESOURCE PACK available from EDI Plc FREE of charge.

### **13.1 Making a presentation**

Students have to know the different types of presentation that might be carried out such as informative, instructional, persuasive etc.

Students should be able to explain the 5 major steps involved in preparing for a presentation or speech.

The importance of, and what is meant by, the following when making a presentation:

- body language
- personal appearance
- mannerisms

- voice, tone, jargon, language
- the use (or misuse) of humour.

### **13.2 Organising and managing effective meetings**

Students need to understand and be able to explain the entire process relating to meetings. Beginning with the selection of participants for the meeting right through to preparing a written report summarising the meeting and its outcomes.

### **13.3 Problem solving, decision making and negotiation**

Students should be able to draw a relevant diagram showing the decision making process (DMP) and explain the relevance and characteristics of each step.

Students need to understand and explain what is meant by negotiation, its purpose and possible roles in public relations. What is meant by hard, soft and principles negotiation and identify some of the elements that can influence the negotiation process.

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## FURTHER GUIDANCE

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### Examination skills and techniques:

With fifteen years experience as a chief examiner across several subjects with LCCI/EDI it never ceases to amaze, and sadden me, as to the lack of examination skills and techniques that many students offer in their examination scripts. In some cases this would seem to be the fault of the individual student. However, unfortunately, in some cases it is also very apparent that some tutors or centres are not teaching examination skills to their students. As a tutor with over thirty years experience from elementary school level through to masters degree qualifications; I regard this as not only a weakness or failure, but a betrayal of a student's trust in their education provider, and none more so than when examinations are the criteria for success or failure.

If you were given a television that was not working and asked to repair it – could you ?  
If you were asked to repair and re-build a gear box for a motor car – could you ?

I very much doubt it in either situation unless, of course, you had been taught how to do it. **It is exactly the same for a student sitting examinations for the first time, they need to be taught how to do it.**

### The most common mistakes that repeatedly appear in every examination series are:

#### 1. EXAMINATION RUBRIC:

Many students DO NOT read the examination rubric – the instructions on the front of the paper.

- students DO NOT put the question numbers of the questions they have answered on the front cover of their paper. There are examination boards that will disqualify students that fail to do this, quite simply because they have not followed the rubric and the candidate is awarded 0 (zero) marks.
- students do not begin the answer to each new numbered question on a fresh page. Indeed in some instances they do not even leave a blank line between successive answers. Once again, some examination boards will disqualify such a paper and award 0 (zero) marks for failure to follow the rubric.
- Students sometimes even fail to number the questions they have answered within the script – once more, many examinations boards would simply award the script 0 (zero) marks either for failing to comply with the rubric or because the examiner does not know which answer relates to which question.
- answering more questions than required by the paper – examiners will only mark the required number of answers and ignore any others.

#### 2. READING THE PAPER:

This is undoubtedly the biggest cause of failure in examinations.

- failing to read the question properly
- not analysing what the question is asking and what is required for the answer. Many students glance at the question and simply write everything they know about the topic whether it is relevant to the answer or not
- failing to answer in the format stated in the question, such as a report or a memo. Depending on student choice of questions this could lose a student up to 8 marks across their paper – the difference between a pass and fail or a pass and credit. Once more numerous examination boards will ignore an answer provided in the incorrect format and award 0 (zero) marks.

*Imagine you hired a builder and instructed them to erect a new wall for you and you gave them the bricks and mortar to do the job ( the instructions in the question). The builder erects for you a new shed instead – would you pay him for his work ?Almost certainly not. Why then should an examiner mark an essay or a letter when the student has been asked to present their answer in a report or memo format ?*

- when required to answer in bullet point format students frequently write essays or extended paragraphs – once more this is a failure to read the question and comply with the instructions given
- failing to give relevant examples when asked for in the question. In many papers there can be as many as 8 to 12 marks awarded for relevant examples. Many students fail the examination simply by not providing examples when asked for.
- offering more answers than required by the question. If a question states:  
“ Give 4 elements of .....?” or “ Explain 5 characteristics of .....?”  
The examiner will only mark the FIRST FOUR/FIVE answers given and ignore and cross through any additional answers. This is particularly sad when the first four/five answer may be wrong but additional answers correct
- not answering questions in sufficient depth. If a question is worth 3 marks then a student should supply three different, and relevant, facts or elements to be awarded 3 marks. Similarly if a question is worth 5 marks the examiner expects to see 5 elements or facts to award the full marks. One or two word answers will always attract the minimum of marks or in many cases zero marks.

### 3. TIME MANAGEMENT:

#### **EVERY EXAMINATION ROOM SHOULD/MUST HAVE A VISIBLE CLOCK AVAILABLE DURING AN EXAMINATION.**

Questions should be allocated the correct amount of time in direct relation the marks awarded for the answer.

- frequently a student can write 2 or 3 pages for an answer that is worth only 2 or 3 marks and yet towards the end of the paper simply offer  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  a page, or sometimes just a list of words, for an answer that is worth 12 to 16 marks
- students **SHOULD** deduct 10 minutes from the total minutes allowed for the examination to read the paper through properly
- students should then deduct a further 10 minutes for checking through their answers at the end
- for example a 3 hour paper has 180 minutes allowed. Deduct two periods of 10 minutes – this leaves 160 minutes to answer the paper
- accordingly in a paper requiring 5 answers this means a student should be allocating 32 minutes to each answer. A more accurate method is to allocate approximately 1.6 minutes for every mark available. As a result a question that is worth 2 marks should be allocated a little over 3 minutes. A question worth 10 marks should be allocated 16 minutes
- it should be impressed on students that keeping to this time allocation for questions is essential to ensure all required questions are at least attempted. An extra 10 or 15 minutes spent on any question is only ever likely to score an additional 1 or 2 marks at the most. Whereas trying to answer a 20 mark question in 10 or 12 minutes will invariably result in at least 10 perhaps more – LOST MARKS.

#### 4. HANDWRITING:

Can there be anything more disastrous than a student having excellent knowledge of a topic but presenting their answer in a manner that cannot be read by the examiner.

- examiners are human beings with normal eyes and without psychic powers. If an examiner cannot read part or all of an answer – they cannot mark it and will award 0 (zero) marks for that part or indeed all of the answer concerned
- students frequently cross out parts of their answers and write their corrections in minute handwriting above the crossing out, making it almost, if not actually, impossible to read. For the time it takes, a student should cross out the relevant section completely and write it again legibly
- as tutors you will, or should, have many instances to see a students handwriting when submitting homework or class exercises – if you have trouble reading it – why should you expect another examiner (with no previous experience of the students work) will find it any easier to read than you do. You need to – no you must – bring this to the attention of the student.

#### **In conclusion:**

In the real world of vocational public relations (and business in general) the **ONLY** form of written internal communication is the report or memo format. You owe it to your students for examination purposes, and their future career prospects, to ensure they are familiar with, and can effectively use such communication formats.

## EXAMPLES OF CANDIDATE RESPONSES:

Following are a series of responses, gaining different levels/grades, from a compulsory question relating to the use of the 6 point planning model for a public relations campaign:

### QUESTION

A medical clinic in a remote area of a developing nation is threatened with closure owing to a lack of funds and shortage of staff. It is the only medical care in the region and its closure would have terrible consequences for the community in the area. There are no printed or electronic media in the area, very limited electricity which is provided by portable generators and a very poor road infrastructure. Literacy levels are very poor amongst the local community.

You have been asked as a graduate in Public Relations to prepare a Public Relations campaign to try and prevent the closure of the clinic.

You **must** give your answer using a **correctly labelled 6-point plan**, and giving your answers **in bullet point format**.

**(20 marks)**

Chief examiners hints and tips:

When answering this type of question a student has to read the question properly and sort out what are the actual facts and **WHAT IS BACKGROUND** information.

THE FACTS ARE: and this will be the subject of the PR campaign.

- medical clinic is faced with closure
- there is a shortage of funds
- they are short of staff.

THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION: this can determine the difficulties that might be faced when carrying out the PR campaign – they **ARE NOT** the subject of the campaign

- clinic is in a remote region
- the only clinic in the region
- terrible consequences for the local community
- there is no printed or electronic media in the region
- very little sources of electricity
- very poor road infrastructure
- high levels of illiteracy.

Having sorted out the facts from the general information it should be very clear that the whole purpose of the PR campaign is to:

- try to keep the clinic open
- try to raise funds for the clinic
- to try and increase the staffing levels.

The campaign has **nothing at all** to do with:

- building another clinic
- getting media into the region
- supplying electricity
- repairing or building roads
- improving the education of the community.

## **SAMPLE ANSWER 1 A distinction grade answer:**

Current situation:

- A medical clinic in a remote region of a developing country
- Clinic is threatened with closure
- Clinic is short of funds
- Clinic has very few staff.

Objectives:

- To keep the clinic open
- To try and source funds for the clinic
- To try and retain existing staff and encourage new staff to work there.

Publics:

- The local community that live in the area
- The current staff working at the clinic
- Local opinion leaders, chiefs and village elders
- The financial community at large
- Local and central government officials.

Media:

- To have meetings with all members of staff
- To arrange public meetings in a suitable venue to address the local community
- To have cartoon type posters displayed in the region and similar flyers distributed
- Personal meetings with opinion leaders, chiefs and elders
- Write and telephone local and central government officials
- Write to and visit major sources of finance in the country
- Printed body media (T-shirts, caps etc) issued to local community.

Budget:

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| ▪ Hire of venues for meetings                  | XXX |
| ▪ Printing of posters, flyers                  | XXX |
| ▪ Purchase and printing of body media          | XXX |
| ▪ Communication expenses (postage, telephone). | XXX |

Evaluation:

- The clinic remained open
- Funds were received to continue the operation
- Staff and volunteers were recruited to work at the clinic.

## **SAMPLE ANSWER 2 A credit grade answer**

Current situation:

- A medical clinic in a remote region of a developing country
- **No media available**
- **one answer missing.**

Objectives:

- To keep the clinic open
- **Introduce media to the region**
- **2 answers missing.**

Publics:

- The local community that live in the area
- The current staff working at the clinic
- Local opinion leaders, chiefs and village elders
- The financial community at large
- Local and central government officials
- **Local media owners in the region.**

Media:

- To have meetings with all members of staff
- To arrange public meetings in a suitable venue to address the local community
- To have cartoon type posters displayed in the region and similar flyers distributed
- Personal meetings with opinion leaders, chiefs and elders
- Meetings with local media owners
- Contact builders to help build roads.

Budget:

- |                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| ▪ Hire of venues for meetings  | xxx |
| ▪ Printing of posters, flyers  | xxx |
| ▪ Renting office accommodation | xxx |
| ▪ Staff wages and expenses.    | xxx |

Evaluation:

- The clinic remained open
- New roads were built
- Media is now available.

Answers in red are either irrelevant as they have nothing to do with the PR campaign or wrong.

### SAMPLE ANSWER 3 A basic pass grade answer

Situation analysis: There is no media in a remote region. There are very poor roads and people have a very low level of literacy.

Objectives: Raise funds for the clinic, build new roads, get more patients for the clinic, improve the literacy of the local community. Encourage the media to come to the region, improve the health of the local people.

Publics: local community, chiefs and elders, local media, local banks and donors, celebrities, drug suppliers.

Media: meetings with the community, face to face talks with chiefs and elders, issue a press release, hold facility visits, place cartoon banners and posters in the region, PA speakers touring in vans.

Budget: offices, travelling expenses, staff wages, hire of PA system.

Evaluation: new roads have been built, there is now a television station in the region, funds were donated, people are more literate.

All answers in red are again either completely irrelevant to the subject of the PR campaign or simply wrong. Furthermore the candidate also lost marks as the answer is not presented in the correct bullet point format.

### SAMPLE ANSWER 4 A complete fail scoring 0 (zero) marks

First of all we have to assess the situation. This means we will have to carry out a full STEEPLE and SWOT analysis to determine what the current situation is. Once we know what the situation is we will then have to determine what our objectives are going to be. Objectives are those things we wish to achieve. Objectives need to be SMART. We now need to identify the public's we wish to communicate with. These are people or organisations that we need to get our message to, as they are the ones who might be able to achieve our objectives. Now we need to decide on how we are going to communicate our message to the identified publics. We have to identify the correct media and communication channels available to us. The budget is also important as we need to know just how much money we have to spend and how it is going to be spent during the campaign. Finally we have to evaluate the results of the campaign to see if we have achieved the objectives we set ourselves.

**IF THE QUESTION** had asked what is a 6 point plan, and what are the steps (or stages) of it, this would be a very good answer and score good marks.

Unfortunately for this candidate the question asks **“PREPARE A 6 POINT PLAN”**.

**All public relations examiners know the theory and how to apply it to a given scenario.** What we wish to examine is quite simply can a student apply the theory to a practical situation.

**REMEMBER**

- The current situation is given in the question if it is analysed correctly
- The current situation will tell you what the objectives should be
- The objectives will tell you the evidence need to evaluate the success or failure of the campaign.

Simply by reading and analyzing the question correctly every student should be capable of scoring a minimum of 8 marks.

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