

Level 3 Certificate in Public Relations



International
Qualifications from EDI

Annual Qualification Review

2008

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INTRODUCTION

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 2007 and 30 September 2008.

Global pass rate 54.67%

Grade distributions

| | |
|-------------|--------|
| Pass | 31.85% |
| Credit | 22.35% |
| Distinction | 3.07% |

GENERAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

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
- compulsory question 1 has seen an improvement in respect of layout for a press release and the quality of information presented, written in the appropriate style.

Weaknesses

- candidates continually fail to read the question set.
- a number of candidates have no idea what is meant by a report or memo format
- failure to follow rubric instructions
 - questions are not numbered in the paper
 - answer numbers are not entered on the front cover
 - answers run into each other as no space is left between answers
 - the use of pencils, light coloured ink pens making reading extremely difficult (an examiner can only mark what can be read)

- many candidates offer answers totally disproportionate to the marks available.
- lack of planning in answers.
- repeated failure to provide examples
- providing examples that are related to the marketing or advertising syllabus and not public relations
- complete misunderstanding of terminology's used in questions
- regurgitating a question and offering it as an answer
- poor handwriting resulting in sections (some times all) of a paper not being marked and zero marks being awarded due to ineligibility.

Please refer to the section Further Guidance at the end of this report for more detailed information

TEACHING POINTS BY SYLLABUS TOPIC

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. Public Relations is often described as a tool to promote sales, create awareness and persuade customers to buy, which of course is the role of advertising.

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

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.

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 many marks in papers by offering examples instead of generics, or offering generics without examples. It is imperative that candidates understand these concepts for every paper will have at least 1 question that requires them to identify publics correctly (the generics with 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.

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.

Syllabus Topics 4 & 5 Public Relations in Developing Countries - Export Public Relations

In every paper there will be a question relating to public relations in developing countries. In the 21st 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 can not 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.

Syllabus Topic 6 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 could afford to build a motorway, an airport or a hospital - answers **HAVE TO BE** realistic.

Syllabus Topic 7 The Organisation of Public Relations

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.

Syllabus Topic 8 Planning and Preparation for Public Relations

Every paper has a question requiring candidates to prepare 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 vaccination campaign in a region with no media facilities----". Candidates will offer answers such as:

- there is no clean water
- there are no medical facilities in the region
- people can not afford medical help
- 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

Syllabus Topic 9 Media Relations

At present the 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 time table) 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 organisations 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.

Syllabus Topics 10 & 11 Channels of Communication - Audio Visuals

Both these syllabus topics are rarely examined with a question carrying more than 5 marks with one exception, namely using and hiring photographers.

Candidates need to appreciate the different concepts of various media such as television/radio, daily press and monthly magazines and journals. The urgency of dead lines, the format of presentation, the meaning of copy dates etc.

Candidates need to fully understand what is meant by audio-visuals and be able to offer suitable examples of such and the type of events they could or would be used for.

The use of photographers is deemed the most important element of this topic and candidates need to understand:

- types of photographic opportunities that might occur for an organisation
- four different types of photographer that are available
- key elements that should be communicated to a photographer when briefing them for an assignment
- what is meant by a photo caption, why it is important and what it should contain.

Syllabus Topic 12 Public Relations own Media

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.

Syllabus Topic 13 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(s) and the final assessment of the exhibitions success (or not).

Syllabus 14 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 15 Ancillary Services

Questions from this topic are invariably only ever worth 2 at the very most 4 marks and usually relate to definitions with a small explanation. Words such as proof reading, sub-editor, desk-top publishing, typography and graphics should be understood and be capable of a simple explanation

Syllabus Topic 16 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.

Candidates should also understand how demographics and ACORN can play an important role in targeting audiences for a public relations campaign

Syllabus Topic 17 Developments & Trends

In recent papers this topic has tended to center around the Internet and its impact upon, and uses in, public relations.

Many candidates lose site of the fact they are taking a public relations paper or fail to read the question properly and provide many answers that are marketing based such as:

- can use for eCommerce
- can advertise world wide
- can source products world wide
- is available for business 24/7
- can reach customers all over the world

Needless to say they score minimal (if any) marks for such answers

A very useful exercise for tutors is to ask candidates to visit the websites of some of the major global organisations and to look for the pages dedicated to public relations activities - to read their recent press releases, to examine the pages devoted to corporate affairs, to examine their community relations activities which they publish on the Internet.

Within this syllabus topic candidates need to understand the difference between cable and terrestrial television as well as the uses of CCTV (closed circuit television) and video conferencing.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

General Comments

As stated in overall general weaknesses tutors and candidates alike need to be fully aware that many candidates fail the examination purely and simply because the **do not read** the questions correctly, or completely.

In every series of examinations many candidates fail for this reason alone. Indeed many of the answers that may be offered are factually accurate, but unfortunately do not relate to the specific question that has been asked.

Many questions require the candidate to demonstrate their ability to perform a particular exercise, the prime example being the 6 point planning model. Many students simply regurgitate the model and use the theory of the model without any practical application as required by the question.

Planning Answers and Organising Information

Many candidates do not take any time at all to think about the answer they are going to give and to plan the logical presentation of information. Having read a question they immediately launch into mental download and simply write everything they know about the topic being examined. This invariably results in many lost marks as vital elements of an answer are missed and surplus information irrelevant to the answer offered.

If a question asks for examples then marks have been allocated for examples. Failure to give pertinent examples will result in lost marks.

If a question asks for --- "give 5 examples" or "give 4 considerations" --- etc then the first 5 examples or 4 considerations given will be the only ones marked, whether they are right or wrong. This is unfortunate for a candidate as frequently correct answers may be offered above the required number for the question - but will not be marked.

Candidates need to allocate the correct amount of time to each section of a question in proportion to the marks available. In every series papers are received where candidates can offer a page or even two pages for an answer that is worth only 2 or 3 marks. Invariable this can result in candidates running out of time and not completing the required 5 questions for the paper, or more frequently later answers carrying 10,12 or even 15 marks will have one or two word answers or be completed in less than ½ a page of writing.

Many candidates lose 2 marks on questions that are required to be prepared in report format and layout, or in memo format quite simply because they either do not read the question or are not familiar with these formats. If the candidate attempts 4 such questions this can amount to 8 marks - often the difference between a pass or fail.

EXAMPLES OF CANDIDATE RESPONSES

The compulsory question in every paper is the press release which candidates have to answer if they are to receive a certificate of passing the exam.

The question is:

Bus-Line, a supplier of public transport in your country, is to launch 5 more bus routes in your capital city. This is the result of a grant from the government of \$2 million. These new routes will also create 50 new jobs in the company. Write a **news release** of **no more than 200 words** announcing this information to the news media. You may invent any **relevant and credible** details to support the announcement.

(Marks are awarded for content, style and layout of the news release)

(20 marks)

The following is a very poor answer that would score minimal marks

News from Bus-line

We are pleased to announce to our esteemed and precious customers that we are going to launch 5 new bus routes. The buses will run from Hackney every 20 minutes and will stop at Long Lane, Green Avenue, the shopping centre, Brown Road and finish at Smith Drive. We are also recruiting 50 new staff to work as drivers for us. We will be offering fantastic rates of pay, plenty of time off and all new staff will be issued with a new uniform. Mister Peter King the operations manager said . We will give all staff a new uniform which will be dark green trousers, a white shirt with a green tie. Every member of staff will be given 2 uniforms so that they will always have a clean one to wear. We will be painting all our new buses in the company's house colours which are dark green and white. To promote our new routes we will be using penetration pricing and will have a sales promotion of 2 rides form the price of 1 for the first week we are operation. If you want to book your tickets in advance ring this number now 123-4567. On the very first bus to leave the garage we will have the reigning Miss World beauty queen as our guest passenger.

A. Candidate
Press Officer.

As you will see, everything is wrong in this answer:

- there is no proper heading or press release layout
- it is written as an essay
- repeated use of the first person
- liberal use of puffery
- minimal information given
- completely unnecessary "padding" occupies much of the content
- advertising copy is very evident
- no quotation marks
- numbers in numerals and not written

Total marks for this answer 3 marks.

A more acceptable answer that scores marks across the whole range for layout, content and style.

News from Bus-Line

News release

New bus routes for Bus-Line

Bus-Line announced today , that it is to launch five new bus routes in the London Borough of Hackney. The launch of the new routes is a direct result of a government grant of \$2 million .

The launch of these new routes which is planned for January 1st 2008, will create 50 new job vacancies based at the company's depot in Sunny Lane, Hackney. For many months our customers have been asking for new routes to help them get to work and to allow them to go shopping. Now at last we can give them what they have been asking for

Mr Nigel King the Operations Director for Bus-line stated " The government grant is a major triumph for the company, we have been campaigning for such support for a long time"

The company have opened negotiations for the supply of 50 new buses, each with a capacity for 60 passengers and a deal is expected to be concluded in the future. All buses will be painted in the company's house colours of green and white

Last year we were the most profitable transport operator in the whole country which is why the government gave us the donation

ENDS

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This is a much better answer and would have scored sufficient marks for a pass

- a much better layout with correct headings and some details at the end
- more factual information supplied with minimal puffery
- spasmodic use of the 1st person

Total marks for this answer 11

An excellent answer that would gain a distinction

News from Bus-Line

News release

Launch of new bus routes creates fifty jobs

Bus-Line announced today 15th November 2007 during a press conference at their head quarters in London, that it is to launch five new bus routes in the London Borough of Hackney. The launch of the new routes is a direct result of a government grant of \$2 million which the company received on November 10th 2008.

The launch of these new routes which is planned for January 1st 2008, will create 50 new job vacancies based at the company's depot in Sunny Lane, Hackney. The new routes will all depart from Hackney to destinations in Ealing, Greenwich, Balham and Leyton.

Mr Nigel King the Operations Director for Bus-line stated " The government grant is a major triumph for the company, we have been campaigning for such support for a long time. We can now press ahead with the planned expansion of our routes and provide the type of service our customers expect from us"

The company have opened negotiations with the Mercedes Benz Company for the supply of 50 new buses, each with a capacity for 60 passengers and a deal is expected to be concluded by the end of this week.

Bus-Line was created when public transport was de-nationalised by the Conservative government in 1988 and operates in several major cities within the United Kingdom, employing more than 3,000 people.

ENDS

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Date 15th Nov. 2007
Ref: Bus-line 11/15

- correct headings and complete detailed layout
- every bit of relevant information supplied
- relevant and credible additional information supplied by the candidate
- correct style

Total marks for this answer 20

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