

2004 Administration

Higher Paper 1

Finalised Marking Instructions

2004 HIGHER ADMINISTRATION PAPER ONE

SECTION ONE

Article adapted from *Training Journal*, May 2003

Question 1

Describe **4** ways in which homeworking may enhance the work/life balance of individuals.

4 marks

- Allows opportunities to make personal appointments outwith constraints of normal business hours
- No travel may mean less stress - journeys into work not required so stress avoided
- Less cost thereby giving more disposable income
- No travel means shorter 'working day'
- Can arrange working hours flexibly to fit around other commitments – eg split work between morning and evening rather than morning and afternoon
- Can work in familiar surroundings, set out in a way that suits the homeworker. This may be more comfortable and lead to greater motivation, greater sense of wellbeing and control over working environment
- Childcare arrangements may be easier to manage around more flexible working hours
- Homeworker can arrange the working area to suit his/her requirements/preferences – leading to higher morale and greater productivity

Question 2

'Technology can be **both** an aid and a barrier to effective communication.'

With reference to **3** methods of electronic communication discuss this statement.

6 marks

One word answers are NOT acceptable

No marks for naming method/s of communication

Aids and barriers must be specifically linked to methods. If same barrier repeated for different methods of communication then candidate must expand on point and relate to specific methods eg

Videoconferencing – high cost of equipment high

Mobile phone – cost of monthly rental and calls is high

Award one mark for an aid and one mark for a barrier for each of three methods

Method	Aid	Barrier
Videoconferencing	Allows meetings to take place at a distance	High cost of equipment Nuances of body language cannot be considered Technical problems
Voicemail	Allows messages to be left 24/7	Does not allow instantaneous clarification of messages Access to voicemail outwith organisation
Mobile telephones	Allows employees to be contacted when mobile	Signal strength variable Batteries need charging Easy to lose/be stolen Call costs can be expensive
Email	Allows international communication instantly Multiple messaging	Open to misinterpretation (eg tone of messages) Relies on people checking emails regularly Efficient tracking of emails can be difficult Spam email can slow down the system
Internet, web conferencing, telephones, fax, pagers, e-diaries can all be accepted as methods of electronic communication		

Question 3

Compare and contrast a flat organisational structure with a tall organisational structure.

4 marks

One mark for each distinct point about flat and tall organisational structure, minimum of one on each. Do not award 2 marks for opposites unless each point is sufficiently well developed. Deduct 1 mark if no attempt made at comparing and contrasting (whereas, however, as opposed to, but, rather than, very different from because ...). Layout of answer may also demonstrate compare and contrast

- Flat organisation structure allows for clearer lines of communication whereas in a tall organisation structure the number of levels may make effective communication more difficult
- Flat organisational structure reduces the number of promotion opportunities whereas in a tall organisational structure there are a greater number of posts to be promoted to
- Flat organisational structure may not offer employees a clearly recognised career progression route whereas in a tall organisational structure career paths are often hierarchical
- Flat organisational structure allows for closer team working on tasks as often the task is divided over less people than in a tall organisational structure

Question 4

Describe a procedure for effective change management.

6 marks

One word answers are NOT acceptable. Candidates must show understanding of the process involved in change management ie some illustration of structured order should be apparent in responses. It is not sufficient for a candidate to simply list the ordered steps without explanation. Naming of stages not required as long as process is described.

- Plan – the reasons for change and the desired outcome should be justified and well thought out before being presented to staff for comment
- Inform – staff should be informed of the plan for change and given the time to reflect
- Consult – staff should be given the chance to comment/make suggestions on plans
- Modifications – original plan may be modified in light of staff reaction
- Planning for implementation – new equipment, training required, procedures drawn up
- Implementation of change to agreed timescale, with appropriate support
- Monitoring and Review – using appropriate methods, eg interview, questionnaire, standard of work
- Amend as required in light of experience and feedback

SECTION TWO

Question 1 (a)

The Administrative Assistant in an organisation has been informed by management that information handling is to be computerised.

Justify the management's decision.

6 marks

It is not necessary to have 6 distinct points – could be fewer points, but with development. Award one mark for each specific point made. Individual points may be justified, or not. If no justification within individual points then an overall justification must be given. Deduct 2 marks if no justification within the whole answer.

- Information can be accessed with greater speed, accuracy and efficiency
- Information can be extracted and analysed automatically, thereby saving time and staff, improving accuracy
- Saves office space as no paper records are required leading to reduction in costs to organisation
- Information can be sorted automatically leading to a time/staff reduction
- Data entry input can be standardised and reduced by use of automatic data entry features
- Inputting of information can be controlled by software
- Greater availability of information for research, therefore reports can take a wider view, contain fuller information, leading to improved decision making
- Confidentiality improved through use of passwords and encryption

Question 1 (b)

When new skills are introduced into an organisation, retraining of staff may be required. Discuss the benefits of on-the-job training to the organisation and to the employee.

6 marks

*Must include at least **one** benefit to the employee and **one** benefit to the organisation*

Benefits to organisation

- No external training costs
- Timetable can be drawn up to suit organisational needs
- Can motivate those delivering on-the-job training
- Can be customised to organisational/individual needs
- Uses organisation's systems/procedures/equipment

Benefits to employee

- Training in familiar surroundings
- May feel more comfortable as trainer is known or is fellow employee
- Reduces need to familiarise themselves with a different environment/equipment
- Can 'connect' with other employees and develop better working relationships

Question 1 (c)

Describe responsibilities employees have for ensuring that they are using their computers in a healthy and safe manner.

8 marks

*Answers must relate specifically to actions/responsibilities of **employees (and to computers, not information)***

8 distinct points or fewer well developed points can be awarded marks.

- Use any equipment such as wrist rests, screen guards, etc provided by employer
- Take regular breaks away from the computer
- Ensure chair at appropriate height and posture is correct
- Ensure monitor at appropriate distance and tilted to avoid glare
- Avoid trailing cables across worktops, along floors
- Do not eat/drink at computer
- Take regular eyes tests – wear spectacles if recommended
- Close blinds/curtains to minimise screen reflection
- Ensure adequate ventilation around computer and in office
- Report any faults/hazards/accidents

Question 2 (a)

Describe the responsibilities of an organisation with regard to the Data Protection Act.

8 marks

8 distinct points or fewer well developed points can be awarded marks.

- Organisation must register as data users
- Information must be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully
- Information must be held for no longer than necessary
- Information must be adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Information must be used for the specific purpose only
- When collecting information data users must state the purposes for which information will be used
- Information must be stored in such a way which prevents unauthorised access or accidental loss or destruction
- Data subjects must be allowed to access to information held about them upon request
- An organisation must change inaccurate information when requested to do so by a data subject
- Information held is up-to-date
- Information must not be taken outside the EU

Question 2 (b)

Compare and contrast methods of communication within an organisation. Make reference to the factors influencing the choice of method.

8 marks

Choice of method must be tied to influencing factors. Examples can be substituted for methods, eg email as opposed to written communication, telephone call as opposed to verbal. Deduct 2 marks if no attempt to compare and contrast.

Written used when a formal record is required for future reference whereas verbal is used for quick exchange of ideas/information or immediate feedback where no written record is required.

Visual communication informs quickly and effectively through immediate impact whereas written communications take longer to convey the same message and verbally it can be difficult to put into words what is easily displayed visually.

Factors influencing choice – speed, distance, feedback required, accessibility, cost, internal/external, confidentiality, legality, nature of information, intended audience, whether or not record is required.

Question 2 (c)

Outline 4 ways of ensuring confidentiality and security of information in the workplace.

4 marks

One word answers are acceptable if they are obviously linked to INFORMATION, eg Dongle. However, if not obviously linked to information, expansion is required for the mark to be awarded, eg CCTV needs explanation – eg to deter physical theft of paper-based information

- Allocate passwords to computer users
- Change passwords frequently
- Control access to information
- Return sensitive documents to their filing cabinet
- Shred confidential document when no longer required
- Limit distribution lists
- Code and encrypt data
- Control physical access of visitors to organisation
- Dongle
- CCTV
- Locked cabinets, doors and windows
- Firewall

Question 3 (a)

The effectiveness of decision making depends upon the information on which it is based.

- (i) Compare and contrast the types of information used by an organisation when making decisions.

6 marks

No mark for naming types of information.

Minimum of 1 type of information as marks may be awarded for development points. Deduct 2 marks if no attempt to compare and contrast.

Primary information – gathered for a specific purpose – whereas secondary information is gathered for one purpose but used for another.

Internal information is generated from within the organisation whereas external information is generated outwith the organisation.

Qualitative information is based on feelings, thoughts and assumptions whereas quantitative information is based upon measurable facts and figures.

- (ii) Describe 4 features of good information.

4 marks

*Award one mark for **explanation** of any 4 points. One word answers **not** acceptable. No marks for naming features.*

- Relevant – irrelevant information may delay or confuse decision making
- Accurate – users of information must be sure that information is not inaccurate as serious consequences may result if decisions are based on incorrect information
- Cost-effective – not be costly to obtain – what is acceptable is dependent upon type of decision to be taken – generally strategic decisions will carry greater budgets
- Available – information must be there when required. Delays will result in missed opportunities, inaccurate decision making, incurring of extra cost
- Sufficient – comprehensive and complete but concise
- Up-to-date – any decisions made must be based on the most up-to-date information possible

Question 3 (b)

When working with spreadsheets, absolute or named cells can be used in formulae. Explain the benefits of using such a cell reference, giving an example of when it might be used.

4 marks

Award one mark for an example and one mark for each benefit (max 3)

Examples: vat rate; commission rate; mark-up rate; deduction rate, selling price, discount rate.

Benefits

- If rate changes one cell is altered with the automatic recalculation of all cells containing the \$ cell reference
- Time saved in recalculation as only one cell changed instead of many
- Reduction in errors as chances of missing a 'rate' change are minimised
- Allows a fill down/across if necessary saving the operator time in the original set up of the spreadsheet

Question 3 (c)

(i) State 2 reasons why an organisation may use a housestyle for production of business documents.

2 marks

- Enhances external image of organisation if all documents produced to a consistent standard
- Easier to train new staff – staff are trained to use one layout and are therefore confident that they are producing documents to the required standard
- Allows movement of staff between departments if housestyle is organisation wide
- Standard documents can be made available more easily to all staff on an intranet

- (ii) Describe how **both** business software and networked computers can aid an organisation in ensuring that business documents are produced in accordance with organisational housestyle.

4 marks

Minimum of one point about business software; minimum of one point about networked computers; development points may be awarded marks.

Business Software contains many features to aid housestyle eg

- Styles – set up for headings, sub-headings, paragraph styles etc
- Templates – set up for common documents, eg letters, memos, reports, Minutes
- Spelling/grammar check – as well as standard dictionaries, customised dictionaries particular to the organisation aid staff with technical/specialist language
- Macros – used to automate common functions within documents eg insertion of signature block incorporating a scanned signature in a letter
- Limit fonts, sizes and styles available to match organisational requirements

Networked computers allow:

- Shared data on network systems – enables templates and standard documents to be used by employees with greater ease than with floppy disks

Question 4 (a)

Describe the possible consequences of an organisation allowing employees to plan their own business travel and accommodation.

4 marks

Marks must be awarded for 4 distinct consequences

- Corporate rates not given **incurring extra expense**
- Insurance not arranged **putting travellers at risk**
- Time taken to arrange greater as not specialist field **leading to reduced normal production**
- Lack of awareness of organisational budgetary limits **leading to overspend**
- Lack of knowledge re travel requirements eg visas **may lead to difficulties upon departure or arrival**
- Book accommodation too far away from meeting venue, **leading to late arrival at meeting and additional costs for taxi fares**

Question 4 (b)

Compare and contrast the use of paper based and online/electronic diaries.

6 marks

Minimum of one point on e-diaries and one point on paper-based diaries. Six distinct points can be awarded one mark each, or fewer points with development points gaining one mark each.

Deduct 2 marks if no attempt to compare and contrast.

- Online allows for instant update of diaries on a regular basis whereas paper-based often means that 2 diaries have to be maintained and reconciled when the line manager returns
- On-line allows for multiple diaries to be synchronised whereas paper-based needs all diaries to be made available at the one location for multiple participant appointments to be made. Electronic diaries can be synchronised with other compatible users when connected to an organisation's intranet
- Online/electronic diaries often allow project tracking and reminders to be built in so that progress of tasks can be monitored more easily than with paper based systems
- An electronic/online diary can be combined with a database containing the contact details of clients/fellow employees allowing quick searches for specific customer groups (eg all customers in Leeds) whereas a paper based diary although containing the same information cannot be searched and sorted easily
- Paper-based diary can be lost/ripped/stolen/accessed by unauthorised people whereas an e-diary can be held securely and password protected
- e-diaries allow for recurring appointments to be entered automatically whereas these have to be entered manually each time into a paper-based diary

Question 4 (c)

(i) Discuss 5 factors that influence time management

5 marks

*One word answers are **not** acceptable*

- People – demands upon you, wanting to chat, interruptions, inadequate support from co-workers who are required to feed information into a task
- Time stealers – distractions (NOTE: list of time stealers – AWARD ONE MARK only)
- Lack of skill in prioritising tasks
- Unforeseen circumstances – emergencies, non-routine situations arising eg illness – several members of staff off leading to more work for others
- Changes in someone else's priorities that affect your plans
- Unavailability of resources required for tasks
- Delegation skills
- Personal characteristics – are you a procrastinator; are you chatty; inability to say no
- Lack of set deadlines for tasks
- Stress/illness affecting ability to plan and prioritise

(ii) Outline the possible consequences of inadequately defined targets to an organisation and its employees

5 marks

minimum of one consequence to the organisation and one consequence to the employee; 5 distinct points or fewer with development points.

To an organisation

- Tasks run over budget, **leading to organisational overspend**
- Tasks run late – **could lead to lost business**
- Breakdown in working relationships – **causing absenteeism, high staff turnover, unhappy working environment**
- Tasks completed incorrectly due to ambiguities in interpretation – **could lead to dis-satisfied customers**

To an employee

- Stress could **lead to absenteeism/low morale**
- Feeling of inadequacy if targets unrealistic/unachievable – **leading to a loss of confidence**
- If target not specific enough employee may be unsure of how to undertake tasks associated with the target and may complete them inaccurately, **leading to lost time**
- If targets not adequately defined staff may take longer than really needed to achieve target, **leading to under-productivity and loss of profit for organisation**

Question 5 (a)

Despite careful planning and preparation for a meeting last minute problems may arise. Suggest 3 such problems and discuss how each might be dealt with by an administrative assistant.

6 marks

3 distinct problems with 3 associated solutions are required, one mark for each problem and one mark for each solution

- Non-quorate meeting – inform all participants as soon as possible, cancel and reschedule the meeting
- Delay/absence of chairperson – appoint a stand-in Chairperson, brief that person and start the meeting
- Non-arrival of a key speaker at the meeting – re-order the agenda or re-schedule the agenda item to a future meeting
- Absence of meeting secretary – appoint temporary secretary, ensuring they have all the necessary paperwork
- Missing paperwork – arrange to have the paperwork copied if necessary and brought to the meeting
- Errors in Minutes of the previous meeting – note the error and record in Minutes of current meeting that the Minutes of previous meeting contained an error and were amended
- Breakdown/non-availability of equipment, eg OHP – source and use of flipchart, whiteboard
- Double booking of room – locate another suitable room

Question 5(b)

- (i) Outline the possible consequences of failing to support a formal meeting with documentation.

5 marks

There are no marks for naming the document, but the document must be named in order that you know what is being referred to and marks awarded accordingly. More than one mark can be awarded to a document if different specific consequences are given.

- Notice of Meeting – without this document participants would not know where, when and why the meeting is to take place. **Intended participants may therefore not attend and quorum may not be reached**
- Agenda – without this document participants would not know the content of the meeting. They would not be prepared for the meeting. **They may not be able to participate in discussions during the meeting**
- Minutes of the previous meeting – without this document participants would not be aware of discussions, decisions, and actions from the previous meeting which **may impact on the current meeting**
- Minutes of current meeting – without this document actions would not be recorded and therefore **may not be carried out**. There would be no formal record of discussions/decisions and participants **may have different interpretations about what has happened at the meeting**
- Action minutes – if not produced those with actions may not know that they have actions and therefore **not carry them out, leading to missed deadlines**

- (ii) **Outline the problems that can arise if an inappropriate meeting has been organised.**

3 marks

Award one mark for each of 3 distinct points.

- Participants too crowded
- Participants late as parking not available
- Disabled participants have difficulty in assessing venue
- Participants late if not close to public transport networks
- Participants do not have required facilities – eg OHPs, video
- If venue wholly inappropriate, meeting may have to be moved to another venue/time/date
- If too big a venue chosen, may be considered a misuse of resources

Question 5 (c)

The Internet has had a major impact on business. Justify an organisation's decision to set up a website for the purposes of e-business.

6 marks

Justification must be applied to each or any point or an overall justification given. Award one mark for each distinct point/development point. Deduct 2 marks if no attempt to justify.

- Advertising – potential to reach a wider audience without additional cost to the organisation
- e-ordering – customers can check availability of stock and order instantly; allows customers to track progress of orders – may lead to greater customer satisfaction if the customers felt ‘in control’
- e-payments – customers can pay for ordered goods instantly via secure website. Avoids ‘cash flow’ problems for organisation
- Saving space – ‘virtual office’; therefore saves costs to the organisation
- Instant stock control – enabling automatic reordering from suppliers – no orders lost/delayed due to lack of stock
- Automated responses – eg your order has been despatched, your payment received etc – customers value instant feedback
- email contact with customers via ‘contact us’ button – ease of contact for customers
- Tracking interest in company/product through counter on website – organisation can see which products customers are most/least interested in and target future advertising more to reflect this
- Reduction in stationary and postage costs through instant invoicing, promotions on website as opposed to mailshots
- On-line discounts – special promotions can be offered as incentive for ordering online and as a result the organisation benefits from reduced overhead costs
- Homeworkers can access a secure area of the website for job-specific tasks, or for organisational information
- Staff can access website for information, eg job vacancies, organisational chart

[NOTE: No distinction made between e-business and e-commerce in awarding marks]

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]