

IFE Level 4 Certificate in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Unit 5 – Leadership and Management

Examiner Report – March 2016

Introduction

37% of the candidates that sat the examination achieved a Pass.

Nearly half of the candidates that failed the examination achieved fewer than 30% of the marks available on the paper. Many candidates appeared to have taken the examination without undertaking any preparation.

At this level candidates are expected to have a thorough understanding of the concepts and theories that underpin effective management and leadership and to be able to take a high level view of the way that organisations operate. Many candidates appeared to write from personal experience and to focus on only limited areas. A common failing was for candidates to provide detailed descriptions of processes (eg disciplinary, recruitment, appraisal etc) without demonstrating understanding (as required by the question) as to the purpose of the arrangements or how the arrangements shaped the culture and effectiveness of the organisation.

As in previous examinations, some candidates appeared to misread one or more questions. Candidates sometimes focussed on only a phrase, or part of a phrase, in the question rather than reading the whole question and fully answering the question.

Generally candidates performed best on questions 5 and 6 and performed least well on questions 7 and 4.

Question 1

- a) *Explain how effective budget planning contributes to the delivery of an organisation's strategic plan. (15 marks)*
- b) *Describe the problems which can affect the effective implementation of budgets. (5 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Few candidates achieved high marks for part a) of the question. Some candidates listed points but did not explain them or link them back to the achievement of objectives; for example, candidates often identified the need to ensure that resources were allocated to different departments within the organisation but failed to explain that resources should be commensurate with the objectives and priorities allocated to the department.

Most candidates performed well on part b) and were able to identify the types of problems that might be encountered. Some candidates provided only lists of words or phrases without describing the problems and this limited the marks that could be achieved.

Question 2

Explain the benefits that a well-planned and clearly structured disciplinary procedure can have for managers. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Many candidates focussed on providing detailed descriptions of the stages in a disciplinary procedure. This did not answer the question. At level 4, candidates need to take a higher level view and demonstrate that they understand the purpose and value of procedures.

The benefits that could have been explored included: providing transparency about what is expected in terms of behaviour and what will not be tolerated by the organisation; provision of a structured approach so that managers have a clear remit and approach to follow; demonstrating that everyone will be treated in the same way.

Question 3

Explain the factors a manager needs to consider when implementing organisational change. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Some candidates wrote at length about the reasons why change might be needed. These candidates often omitted to answer the question that had been asked which related to factors to be considered when actually “implementing” change.

Some candidates listed points without explaining them and this limited the marks that could be achieved.

Factors that could have been identified and explained included: previous changes and how these changes had been implemented including what had been successful and unsuccessful; causes of resistance to change and how to overcome these; ensuring that an effective implementation plan is in place so that all aspects of the organisation that are affected are identified and can be considered.

Question 4

- a) Explain why organisations use job evaluation as an integral part of their human resource management. (8 marks)*
- b) Describe four of the factors that are taken into account in a points rating scheme. (4 marks)*
- c) Explain the difficulties that may be encountered in implementing a job evaluation scheme. (8 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was the least popular option for candidates. In order to answer the question, candidates needed to specifically understand job evaluation; unfortunately, few of the candidates that attempted the question demonstrated this understanding. Some candidates confused job evaluation with staff appraisal and provided much irrelevant text in their responses.

Question 5

You have recently been appointed as the supervisor of a team of frontline staff. Describe the leadership skills that you will use and the actions you will take to maintain the motivation and effectiveness of the team. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular choice for candidates and most candidates attained good marks.

Some candidates demonstrated basic knowledge but failed to provide sufficient information to achieve very high marks. A number of candidates concentrated on Maslow and included diagrams and detailed explanations of the different levels; whilst this had some value, it did not fully meet the requirements of the question and candidates that focussed their response to the question in this way achieved only low marks.

Candidates that achieved high marks described skills and actions such as: carrying out background work to find out about the team so as to identify any potential issues and to determine the most appropriate leadership style; setting performance challenges to energise and bond the team; using communication skills to set out a vision and to ensure that staff are fully briefed on expectations; using listening to skills to assess individual issues and to encourage the team to come forward with ideas for improvement.

Question 6

Describe, using examples, the factors which influence the development of an organisation's strategic plan. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was generally answered well.

Some candidates wrote at length about the SWOT analysis process but did not link their responses back to the organisation's strategic plan. Other candidates omitted to include examples as required by the question.

Factors which could have been described included: the organisation's Vision or Mission Statement; the needs and preferences of customers and other stakeholders whether internal or external (eg following consultation/research with customers/ stakeholders); future assessments (eg impact of changes in population size/technology and/or changes in the structure of other connected organisations/services); the sector in which the organisation operates and any competition.

Question 7

Explain how an organisation can ensure that the selection of a new employee is based on an objective assessment of skills, knowledge and behaviours. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was the least well answered question. The focus of the question was on “ensuring” the “objective assessment of skills, knowledge and behaviours” when recruiting new staff.

Many candidates wrote at length about stages in the recruitment process without explaining how the steps ensured an objective assessment.

Those candidates that achieved good marks demonstrated understanding of the way that different elements of the recruitment process worked to ensure that the right person was selected; for example, the job analysis sets out exactly what is needed and enables the production of objective and appropriate job descriptions; short-listing enables the assessment of completed application forms against the employee specification to identify the candidate who appears to be the most suitable; a well constituted and trained interview panel will have knowledge of the skills needed and be able to ask relevant and searching questions in relation to the job role and each applicant’s suitability.

Question 8

Explain how managers should use formal performance appraisal to help achieve organisational objectives. (20 Marks)

Examiner Feedback

Some candidates concentrated on describing the appraisal process rather than explaining the value of performance appraisal in delivering organisational objectives.

Those candidates that provided good responses explained the part that performance appraisal plays in the performance management process which begins with the strategic plan. They explained how performance appraisal can be used in motivating individuals, encouraging skill development and ensuring that individuals fulfil performance requirements in terms of their own individual role and also their role within the team and the organisation.