

English for Business

Preliminary Level

Past Papers **2007**

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English for Business

Level 3

Past Papers 2007

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There was no Series 1 in 2007

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QUESTION 1

Situation

You are employed by a company based in Zurich, Switzerland called *Transports of Delight*. The company commissions paintings of historic ships, railway locomotives, aeroplanes, cars and other vehicles, which are converted into prints and sold all over the world.

The owner of the company, Mr Guiseppe Russo, is proud of the fact that his company has gained a high reputation for the accuracy as well as the high quality of the prints. Mr Russo recently showed you the following letter he had received from a customer in the United Kingdom.

7 April 2007

76 Abbey Road
Lincoln
LN2 6BB

Dear Sir or Madam

Historic Locomotive Print “Mallard”

I have recently purchased a copy of this print. Although I have to say that it is well painted I have to point out some of my concerns about the painting and the information given about it.

I was disappointed that the locomotive was depicted in the livery of British Railways. When Mallard was built and first brought into service it was in the much more attractive livery of the London and North Eastern Railway. It was over ten years later when the railways were taken into public ownership that the rather dull British Railways livery was used.

However, my main complaint is with the information given about the engine. Quite correctly it was stated that this was one of the A-4 class of locomotive introduced in 1935. There was then an elementary error; it is stated that there were 35 locomotives built when, in fact, there were 34. British Railways numbered them from 60001 to 60034. Again, quite correctly it was stated that this locomotive achieved a world record for steam locomotives but at the time its speed was measured in miles per hour, not kilometres per hour. The official record was “126 mph”, not “202.7 kph”. Finally you state that this record was achieved on 3 July 1939 when it was exactly one year earlier, 3 July 1938. I’m proud to say that my grandfather was one of the train crew.

I hope you will take more care with accuracy in future.

Yours faithfully

A.H. Peppercorn

(Mr A H Peppercorn)

QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

Mr Russo says this to you.

“I’ve sent a copy of the letter to this picture’s artist, Terence Matteo. I’d be very surprised if there are any inaccuracies in the picture, however. Terence is one of the most famous train painters in the world and he is renowned for his meticulous attention to detail. Unfortunately, he’s also well known for his, shall we say, artistic temperament! When Terence gets back to us, would you please respond to Mr Peppercorn? If we are wrong, do apologise but if we are correct, express this as tactfully as you can. One thing I should say is that we made a decision from the outset to use only metric measurements, as most of our customers are more familiar with them.”

You then received the following message from Terence Matteo on your telephone answering machine.

“This man is talking nonsense. This bit about his grandfather being in the Mallard train crew, well they must have had a big crew! I’ve heard from hundreds of people over the years who all claim that a relative was part of the crew. They can’t all have been.

“Anyway, he’s right about the livery of course. But my painting is from a very famous photograph of Mallard at Edinburgh Waverley Station in August 1954. At this time it was in British Railways colours – which are far from dull!

“He gives himself away when he says that stuff about 34 in the class. A real expert would have known that 35 were built but one was destroyed in 1942. Now in my notes to you I did say that it achieved 126 miles per hour on 3 July 1938. If anything else appears in the text that’s not my fault.”

You check that “livery” means the colour the locomotive was painted.

Task

Write the letter to Mr Peppercorn as requested. You can assume that the company’s headed notepaper is used but you should include all other components of a business letter.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You are employed by *The Riverdale Group*, a small manufacturing company in your area. The Company Manager, Mr Cheng Ling, has just spoken to you on the subject of staff financial awareness. He said this to you.

“Look, I’ve been hearing about a new government scheme where it will support us if we offer some sort of training on financial awareness for our staff – you know, pensions, mortgages, savings, investments, that type of thing. I’d like you to contact the local government office to find out more about this, please, particularly what is in it for us! I’d also like you to sound out the staff and see what they think about the idea. It might be useful to find out which topics they would regard as important. When you’ve done this, please put together a report that I can present to the Board of Directors. Make any appropriate recommendations – I’ll leave that to you. Please start the report by saying what the government can offer and why it’s a good idea for us (if it is, of course!) and then go on to say what you have found out from the staff. You’d better produce the report for me but if it’s OK I’ll certainly put it on the agenda of the next Board meeting.”

The results of your research are as follows:-

Staff reactions:

Do you think it is a good idea for the company to provide some financial awareness training?

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----|----|----|------------|----|
| Yes | 93% | No | 3% | Don’t know | 4% |
|-----|-----|----|----|------------|----|

What financial topics would you like to see covered?

Percentage of staff making the topic the first choice.

| | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Retirements/Pensions | 46 % |
| Assistance with tax returns | 27 % |
| House purchase/mortgages | 15 % |
| Best use of savings | 8 % |
| Investments/Stocks and Shares | 4 % |

Typical comments from staff

Mrs B “I’m starting to think of my retirement now. I’d like to know more about pension benefits and how I can improve on my company pension.”

Mr K “Any information would help. I know very little about any aspect of finance.”

Mrs G “My family soon spends everything I earn, so I don’t need any advice about that. And it’s a long time before I retire.”

Miss S “Oh yes. I’m sure I pay too much tax so I’d love some advice about this. And we should think about our pensions now, when we are young, not just before we retire.”

From an interview with Ms Manjit Basi, Information Officer at the local government office.

Government keen to promote financial awareness – is supporting new programmes in schools – will pay 50% of the cost of providing training in companies – will provide speakers on various topics.

Good for country if everyone is financially aware – people look after themselves better – more prosperous.

But good for companies as well. Helps improve employer – employee relationships, demonstrates a caring attitude, helps when there are changes in companies (eg when there are redundancies or staff have to move.)

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

Task

Write a report as requested by the Company Manager.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You are employed by an agency set up by your government to promote tourism in your area. Your agency has been advised that another branch of government, the Central Audit Office (CAO) has been set up to investigate how well all government departments and agencies are performing. Full details of this investigation will be announced soon but you have been asked to speak to a representative of the CAO to find out what it will involve. You spoke to Ms Irene Wong, Deputy Head of the CAO and this is a record of your conversation.

You: Hello Ms Wong. Thanks for agreeing to speak to me.

Ms Wong: I'm pleased to do so, particularly if it makes you feel more comfortable about our investigation.

You: Well, I hope it will! But first can you just explain what you will be doing? We are a small organisation and quite new, so we have little experience of these things.

Ms Wong: Of course. What we do is carry out what we call an Independent Performance Assessment (IPA). We'll be carrying out an IPA on all local and national government departments and authorities. After all, each government agency is funded by the people of the country who pay taxes – like you and me – so it is important that we look at how well you have been doing your job over the previous year.

You: So should we be worried about this?

Ms Wong: Well I hope not from what we have learned so far. We are very positive about the way in which everyone operates. If you are achieving good results and doing your job well, you have nothing to fear.

You: Are the results of your investigations published?

Ms Wong: Oh yes. The government believes very strongly that our work should be transparent and that all citizens of the country should know how well their money is being spent. But I should say that we will definitely not be publishing league tables showing how well each department is doing, despite the rumours. This wouldn't be fair; each department faces different challenges and issues so we can't really compare, say a police service with a hospital.

You: That's reassuring. So what exactly do you assess?

Ms Wong: Well, as we say on our website, we have five main lines of enquiry; we look at the aims of your agency or department, your priorities, your capacity to achieve your aims, performance management and what you have achieved so far. Basically we consider if you have the right ambitions and if you are making best use of resources.

You: That's a lot to consider. So how do you do this?

Ms Wong: Well we first ask each department to carry out a self assessment. It is important for us to know how you feel you are performing under our five lines of enquiry. We then arrange to visit your organisation to carry out the main audit.

You: So this is when you meet the staff?

Ms Wong: Yes, but there's much more to it. We do talk to staff but we also interview a range of stakeholders of the organisation – that is anyone with an interest in what you do, such as, in your case, people involved in the tourist industry, local people, potential visitors and the like. We examine all your records but we like to "shadow" some of your staff, that is spend some time observing them in action, and we attend meetings, look at your documentation and try to get a good "feeling" from your organisation.

You: I've heard you use something called "triangulation", what does this mean?

Ms Wong: You're correct. Triangulation is a very important technique. It's all about having evidence from at least three sources (often more) when we look at an issue. Let's say we want to consider your advertising. We might ask you about it but we'd also ask people from the advertising industry what they think about it as well as members of the public. This all helps to make an overall, balanced judgement.

You: Perhaps our biggest worry is what happens to the results of the audit, and what action might be taken.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

- Ms Wong: Fortunately that is not up to us. We only carry out the audit; it's up to the government to decide what to do with it. But if organisations are doing well, our results could be seen as praise or congratulations – giving people “ a pat on the back.” But if things aren't going well, governments might want to give support to organisations, or perhaps take more drastic measures – perhaps even closing some down. But don't worry. I'm sure this won't happen in your case.
- You: Let's hope not. I believe we are doing a good job so I hope the audit will recognise this. Thanks very much for your help, Ms Wong.
- Ms Wong: It's a pleasure. Good luck with your audit!

Task

Using the information given in the interview answer the questions below **in your own words, as far as possible** to demonstrate your understanding of the subject.

- (a) Why is Ms Wong happy to speak to you? (2 marks)
- (b) Why were you anxious about the audit before you spoke to Ms Wong? (3 marks)
- (c) Why does Ms Wong suggest that it is important for her department to check on government departments and agencies? (3 marks)
- (d) In what circumstances should government departments not fear the Independent Performance Audit? (2 marks)
- (e) Ms Wong says that it is important that her department's work should be “transparent”. Why do you think she uses this term, and what does it mean? (3 marks)
- (f) Why would it not be fair to publish league tables of the performance of each department? (2 marks)
- (g) What happens before the Central Audit Office visits an organisation and why is this important? (3 marks)
- (h) What is meant by the term “to shadow” members of staff? (2 marks)
- (i) What is triangulation and why does it help the CAO to make a better judgement? (2 marks)
- (j) If the CAO discovers that a government agency is performing very badly, what do you think the government could do? (3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

You are employed by *Lexan Public Relations (LPR)* a small company based in your area. Like most organisations, LPR communicates both internally and externally mainly by email but the company is now rethinking its policy in the light of an advertising campaign which LPR is currently organising for one of its clients, *Conquest Paper Supplies*.

The company manager, Mrs Laura Sallis, recently said this to you.

“Producing the campaign for *Conquest* has made me think. We rarely send out letters through the mail these days but we are creating an advertising campaign to persuade people to do so! I feel we could really gain from using letters, you know, particularly as *Conquest* will provide us with supplies of paper as a part of their contract with us. It might be difficult to convince staff to send out letters but I’d like you to send out a memo to all staff advising them that we’ll have new supplies of company-headed paper available. It’s good quality too, not that flimsy thin stuff we’ve used up to now. In fact you can tell our staff not to use the old paper now, only as scrap paper. To be honest, that’s all it deserves. The new paper is 100 gram quality, I’m told. That doesn’t mean much to me but *Conquest* tell me it’s top quality. Some of it looks exciting – if writing paper can be exciting. Some paper for example is white on the side you write on but bright orange on the other side. When you open an envelope it’s quite eye-catching.

“Anyway, please have a word with our contact at *Conquest*, a nice helpful man called John Dacre. He’ll tell you some of the advantages in using paper rather than email. In fact, could I ask you to start your memo with these advantages so staff will want to read on?”

Mr Dacre says this to you:

“We’re certainly not suggesting that everyone stops using emails and always uses letters. That would be silly. Email is quick, convenient and not costly. So for everyday communication, email is great. But I know you need to impress your new clients, so why not send them a letter typed on our top quality paper? It will stand out from the crowd among other communications and make them feel important. Of course, you can enclose documents and other materials in a letter and you can’t always do this with emails. You really are enhancing your company’s image, believe me.”

You mention this idea to some colleagues who all find the idea of sending out some letters quite attractive. However, one colleague, the Head of Administration says this to you.

“OK, sending out letters on fancy paper is fine, but our staff should remember that any errors such as spelling mistakes or typographical errors really stand out in letters. We don’t mind those in emails because they are informal, but letters have to be accurate and well laid out or they destroy the good impression we’re trying to create. This is just a thought, of course, but I’ve had a lot of experience.”

Task

Write a memo as instructed that could be sent to all members of staff.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 1

Situation

You are employed in the Public Relations Department of *Supasoaps*, a company manufacturing various soap and related products. The company has recently launched a new product called *Funsoap*. The product is aimed at children; it is in the shape of baby animals and it changes colour as it is used, thus encouraging the children to use it more. *Funsoap* has been well received by the public.

Your manager, Mrs Anke Kugler, has given you the following letter from a less satisfied customer.

8th June 2007

19 Central Boulevard
Northville
BVS 6AS

Dear Sir or Madam

Funsoap

I note with interest that you have launched a soap product that changes colour as it is used. I believe that this is a very good idea – but, in fact, it is my idea. I wrote to you two years ago giving details of this. As I was a chemist before I retired I even gave you some suggestions about how the product could be manufactured. I received a non-committal response from you at the time so you can imagine my surprise when I learned that you had actually introduced the product.

I would prefer not to take legal action at this time but I believe I am entitled to be paid a fee for my idea. I'm sure you are making large profits from selling *Funsoap*.

Yours faithfully

Adam Martins

Adam Martins (Mr)

Mrs Kugler says this to you.

"I'd like you to write to Mr Martins. We'd better be careful what we say as we don't know if he genuinely believes he invented the product or if this is just an attempt to get some money from us.

"The problem is that, as you know, we lost all our paper files of customers' letters when we had the fire in the office last year so we can't really check on what he says. But have a word with our Product Research Manager, George Dupont. He'll be able to tell you where the ideas behind the product were developed. Be as polite as you can to Mr Martins, of course, but don't admit to anything that could be damaging to us."

Mr Dupont says this to you.

"I've no recollection of any letter from a customer about *Funsoap* but it has been in the development stage for over four years. In fact, we tried an earlier version about three years ago but we had to withdraw it. The different colour soaps dissolved at different rates, so the soap didn't work. Our laboratory staff have worked hard since then and we've finally got over the problem. To be honest, the idea of colour-changing soap is not very original but we are the only company that has managed to produce a soap that changes colour evenly. And aren't the baby animals great? No one ever thought of that. I think the rabbit is really cute!"

QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

Task

Write the letter to Mr Martins as requested. You can assume that the company's headed notepaper is used but you should include all other components of a business letter.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You are employed in the Finance Department of a large company, *BFE Products*. Generally, the staff of the company work well together but two days ago two employees in the Accounts Section, Ernest Franks and Lee Boland, had a heated argument which ended in a prolonged confrontation. Both were suspended from duty pending further investigations.

The Head of the Finance Department, Ms Brenda Katona has asked you to investigate this incident with the following instructions.

"I've heard so many rumours and exaggerated reports of this incident that I would like you to look into it and put your findings into a report for me. This will help me when I speak to our legal department to decide what action we should take. It will be very helpful if you assemble the facts into a proper order – please start by giving background to the dispute and then describe what happened and who saw this. Obviously I'm not asking you to make any recommendations but if your report can be in a clear and helpful order, I'd be very grateful."

You have not spoken directly to the two individuals concerned but the notes from your interviews with others are as follows.

From an interview with the Head of Accounts Section

Unfortunately I was out of the office when the incident took place. As you know there are normally four of us in the office, myself, Lee, Ernest and young Kylie, our latest recruit. I know Lee and Ernest are not the best of friends and they had been arguing earlier in the morning about something silly – I think it was about football. I was on my way back to the office when I heard Kylie shouting. When I got back, Lee and Ernest were both shouting and swearing at each other – I don't know who actually started the argument, but it had clearly got out of hand. I thought something worse could result so I tried to separate them.

From an interview with Kylie Robert

It was a dreadful experience. Mr Franks and Mr Boland had been arguing in a light hearted way but I then heard Mr Boland say something about Mr Franks' family which wasn't very nice. This was at about 10.45. Mr Franks seemed to lose his temper and started shouting at Mr Boland. They both started swearing at each other and made all kinds of threats, so much so that I called security. I hate it here now – the atmosphere is dreadful. Unless something is done I will be leaving.

From an interview with the Head of the Human Resources Department

I know some of the information on our files is confidential, but I can say a couple of things that might help you. Lee Boland has been working here for 11 years now and he has had two warnings about his behaviour. We moved him out of the Salaries and Wages Office a year or so ago because he didn't get on very well with the other staff. He's a very good worker really, but he can say some very unfortunate things and he does use a bit of bad language. Ernest Franks is much older but he has only been with us for four years. He has had some family problems recently and I know he's under a lot of pressure at home. His record is exemplary, however.

From an interview with a member of security staff

Shortly after quarter to eleven I received a call that there was a dispute in the Accounts Office. When I got there I could see a heated argument was taking place and the Head of the Section was attempting to stop it. I could see that one man, who staff were calling "Ernie", was almost out of control while the other man who I know as Lee Boland seemed to be more in control. They were both using abusive language so I asked both men to leave the office as they were causing offence. I escorted them to the staff room. Ernie seemed to calm down and expressed regret to me about what had happened, but Lee was saying something about how he would "get back at Franks".

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

Task

Write the report as requested. You can use any report layout but you should report on what happened in an appropriate way.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You are employed by a large company that makes great use of the latest technology in its applications and systems. The company is fairly traditional in that staff attend the workplace during normal working hours but management are considering if they can make greater use of staff working from their own homes.

You have been asked to investigate this and you recently came across the following article which summarises many of the issues you are considering.

Home Working Solutions

In a business world that is becoming increasingly competitive and also much more technology-based, more and more businesses are turning towards staff carrying out some or even all of their work from home. This should not be seen as a negative development as flexible working brings many tangible benefits to both companies and their employees.

The possibilities of increasing home working have come about with the advanced communications infrastructure of companies. It has long been recognised that an employee based at a work station at home can access applications that are fully integrated with the systems of the company. For many administrative staff in particular, they can contact colleagues and customers inside and outside the organisation and pass on and receive information in whatever format is required. Clearly some personal contact might be lost but dialogues can take place over the telephone. If visual contact is required the latest technology can allow you to transmit pictures to a receiver who, in turn, can return visual images to you.

It should be said that many organisations that have the technology to develop home working have not done so because they feel there are disadvantages. For example, industrial psychologists advise us that people take up employment for many reasons. For some employees, the financial rewards of working are not the prime motivator, but the companionship of their fellow workers, which would be lost with home working. This argument has some validity but the fellowship of the workplace has already been diluted by the changes to working practices. Even within an office, the worker is increasingly isolated as he or she does not have to leave the workstation to function efficiently.

For many workers, this possible loss of human contact is more than compensated for by the inherent advantages of home working. It is very likely that you can adopt a more flexible approach to your work at home and carry out your tasks around your domestic or social arrangements. Families in which only one person works are now rare, and so there is a great appeal for workers to be able, for example to, take the children to school, look after aged relatives or simply carry out work at a time of day in which they are most comfortable.

A home worker does not have to face the increasingly daunting and expensive task of commuting or travelling to work, something that can take up several hours a week in large cities. These workers have fewer limitations in deciding where they will live and changing employment need not mean moving house if home working arrangements continue.

For companies, a major benefit will be happier, more motivated and therefore more productive staff. Also, there are cost implications, as companies might not need to keep all their premises or office space. Of course, for a large proportion of the population home working will never be a viable proposition; workers involved in a production process or providing a face to face service must attend an appropriate workplace. But for many staff home working is a genuine alternative to travelling in to the workplace and as it becomes more common, companies might be forced to offer this in order to attract and retain key personnel.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

Task

Using the information in the article answer **in your own words as far as possible** the questions that follow.

- (a) Why should home working not be seen as “a negative development”? (3 marks)
- (b) What has brought about the possibility of more staff working from home? (3 marks)
- (c) What kind of communication is lost when home working takes place and how can this be avoided? (3 marks)
- (d) Why might home working be unpopular for some employees? (2 marks)
- (e) In what circumstances would staff find working from home very appealing? (3 marks)
- (f) In what ways does the home worker benefit from the lack of a need to travel to work? (3 marks)
- (g) Explain two reasons why companies could benefit if staff work from home? (4 marks)
- (h) From what you have read in the article use your ideas to suggest a job or a type of job that is suitable for a home worker. Give your reasons why the work is suitable and how all those involved could benefit from home working. (4 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You work in the offices of *Foodfare*, a store selling a wide range of food in your area. The store is famous for its high quality fresh food but also its vast range of packaged and tinned food from all over the world.

You are aware that there has recently been a great deal of unfavourable publicity about some practices carried out in the fishing industry in some parts of the world. It is known that some fishing fleets attempting to catch tuna fish have caught other sea creatures in their nets, particularly dolphins. This has reduced the population of some sea creatures in various areas to levels where they are close to extinction. A recent television programme named several companies that produced tinned fish as being involved in these practices and, unfortunately, *Foodfare's* name was also mentioned as a company selling these products. Today, the store's manager, Mr John Capaldi, said this to you.

"No doubt you've heard about this tuna fish business. It's got a bit out of proportion, really, I would say, but I can see why some people feel strongly. None of us would like to think that sea creatures like dolphins are in danger. Anyway, I believe I've managed to resolve things. We have had complaints from customers and even from staff, so I think it is now time to put things straight.

"First of all, I've checked very carefully and only one of our suppliers, *Tip Top Tuna*, could be accused of anything doubtful. All our other suppliers have impeccable credentials and have never been accused of anything other than fishing legally and responsibly. I've told our canned food department to take all *Tip Top Tuna* products off the shelves and not sell them anymore.

"What we now need to do is reassure our staff and customers. I'd like you to draft a memo to our staff explaining what we've done, and why we've done it. One of our staff did mention that at least one customer brought back some tinned tuna and demanded a refund. I'm not too sure what we should do when this happens. Oh, alright, I'll make a decision now to let staff give a refund on any *Tip Top Tuna* products, but nothing else. We won't advertise this but I suppose it is fair.

"Please advise staff that they need to deal with this in a sensitive manner but let them know why they can reassure all customers. Come to think of it, it might not be a bad idea if we produced a few notices that we could display in our tinned food department. We shouldn't mention any company names here – I know our legal department is now going to consider what action we might take – but a general reassurance about our policy and our products will be useful. This will also support our staff. If you produce an outline of the notice I can get our specialist office staff to produce it."

Tasks

- (a) **Produce the memo** that could be sent to all staff, as instructed. (17 marks)
- (b) **Draft a notice** as requested. (8 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

English for Business Level 3

Series 4 2007

QUESTION 1

Situation

You are employed as an administrator by a company, *Essential Products*, in Rainhill City. The Human Resources Manager, Mr Urhan Ahmed, has asked you to assist him. He says this to you:

“I’ve had a letter from the Teacher Training College in Rainhill City asking us to give a reference for one of its potential students, Sarah Wolf. Now this is not as easy as it seems; Ms Wolf was with us on work experience earlier this year but she was not a full time member of staff, so we have very few personnel records of her time here. I’m sure her school will also give her a reference but I’d like us to do as thorough a job of this as we can.

“The college is particularly interested in our views on these matters; they want to know how reliable and punctual she was, how well she got on with colleagues, how academically gifted she is and whether we feel she would make a “good” teacher.

Now as you know, pupils on work experience spend a short time in four of our departments. I’d like you to speak to the heads of departments where Sarah was based and get their views. Please then summarise the main points in a letter to the College’s Admissions Tutor. I’ll give you the name and address. Please try to summarise what everyone says to fit in to the college’s request, but feel free to make it clear that we can’t comment on everything. I’m not sure that Sarah would have the chance to demonstrate her academic prowess, for example. Please be as supportive as you can but be honest.”

You record the main comments of the Heads of the departments where Sarah spent her work experience.

QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

Head of Human Resources

“Oh yes, I remember Sarah Wolf. She appeared to be a very pleasant young woman, very self assured but a little reserved. She did some very good work for us and got on well with everyone. She seemed very intelligent and I remember talking to her about a career in business. I don't remember her mentioning a career in teaching, but I think she will be diligent in whatever she does. I liked Sarah.”

Head of Finance

“Sarah Wolf? Wasn't she the one we had to send back to the school because of her behaviour? She was probably the worst student we've ever had. Ah, but wait a minute – that was Zara something. Sorry, Sarah Wolf? – now she was different. She was excellent, a very bright young woman. I remember that she was very good with figures which made her very popular with the staff in the section. Her punctuality and attendance were flawless, I recall.”

Head of Administration

“I've asked around our staff and no one seems to remember this person. I do remember that we were supposed to have a student with us but she never actually showed up. I think there were family problems or something. Sorry, I can't help you any further.”

Head of Customer Services

“Well, I happen to know Sarah very well. She is my daughter's best friend. She really is a delightful girl and my daughter says that she'll be an excellent teacher.

She was very good when she was in my department. She's a fairly quiet girl but she really blossomed when she dealt with customer enquiries and complaints. She was never late and all the staff liked her. However, I happen to know that when she was on work experience, her mother was taken ill and she had to stay at home to look after her brothers and sisters. Actually, she missed the next part of her placement, but obviously her family had to come first. She is great with younger children so she is sensible to consider teaching as a career.”

The Admissions Tutor at the Rainhill City College is Mr Jerome Charvet and the address is 56 Eastern Avenue, Rainhill City, RH0 3BD.

TASK

Write a letter for Mr Ahmed's signature, as requested. You can assume that the company's headed notepaper is used.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You are employed by a company, Central Railways (CR), which provides various local and main-line train services and associated facilities. The company is considering the future of the facilities it provides at stations on its route from Metroville to Barnton. Many of the services between these two cities are now expresses and do not call at intermediate stations. This was at the request of passengers and the timing of services between the cities have improved.

Whilst many of these intermediate stations have few facilities, one station, Ashley Junction, has a well-established café. Since the revision of the timetable in June 2007, the use of the café has been considerably reduced and CR is now considering its options.

The Customer Liaison Manager of CR, Ms Bozena Gradnik, has asked you to consider the options and said this to you:

“I’d like you to consider the possibilities for the café. If it is losing money, then we’ll have to do something about it; unless there is a good reason to keep it open, we’ll have to consider closure. But have a word with those who have an interest in the café – customers, station staff, local residents and the like and let me know what the options are. It would help if you could let me know what you think is the best option but you had better give me a good reason for your choice.”

You speak to the Finance Department staff of CR who tell you that the café needs 100 customers per day on average in order to break even, and when you compare the daily average number of customers each month in 2006 and 2007 you find the following:

| Month | Average number of customers per day - 2006 | Average number of customers per day - 2007 |
|-----------|--|--|
| January | 216 | 205 |
| February | 208 | 193 |
| March | 210 | 154 |
| April | 216 | 138 |
| May | 220 | 132 |
| June | 253 | 84 |
| July | 253 | 86 |
| August | 249 | 71 |
| September | 208 | 63 |
| October | 189 | 51 |
| November | 163 | - |
| December | 170 | - |

Typical responses from the various interviews

Current Restaurant Manager

The numbers have really fallen off since the timetable was revised and we are now losing money. I can’t see how this will improve now, unless we actually invest in the café and advertise more to try to attract customers who aren’t travelling on trains. We could perhaps make it into one of these railway heritage cafes, we could put up posters and pictures of trains, have models around the place, and the like. Just an idea, but there would be a cost implication.

Passenger A

Well, yes, we need some refreshment facilities here. Some services still stop here. Have you thought of, maybe having some machines for drinks or snacks? The full scale café probably isn’t needed but as long as we can get a tea or coffee and maybe something to eat that’s all that we need.

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

Passenger B

I know I'm in a minority here, but I think the timetable revision is disgraceful. If you're going to take away the café you'll not be seeing me again.

Passenger C

Well, the new trains all have excellent restaurant cars. Do you really need a station café?

Ashley Council: Business Support Manager

Of course, it's up to the railway company. If the café is making a loss, we don't blame them for thinking of closure. But there aren't many other restaurants in the Station Road area. The company could consider offering the premises as a franchise of one of the major fast-food outfits. Maybe a "burger bar" would do well. Any railway passengers can still use this but it could attract other customers.

Local Resident D

Well, if part of the station is to close, I hope some other use can be found for the premises. It will look dreadful if it is just closed up – it will soon become derelict. That will frighten off the remaining passengers.

Local Resident E

I've noticed that the café is used much more at some times than others. Could the café be opened only when there are more people about? Or maybe only open in summer when there are more people visiting Ashley Recreation Grounds?

TASK

Produce the report as requested, using any appropriate format.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You are employed by a large company as an administrative assistant in the Human Resources Department. The company has made a number of appointments of senior staff recently and some of the appointments have not been successful. The candidate appointed often proved unsuitable for various reasons.

The company is now considering how it can improve its recruitment techniques and is considering introducing a system known as psychometric testing. You have been asked to look into this and you have found the following article which summarises what is meant by psychometric testing and its advantages and disadvantages. After you have read the article, answer the questions that follow to demonstrate your understanding of the issues raised.

Psychometric Testing

Traditionally, the process for recruiting what you hope will be suitable staff for senior posts in an organisation involves advertising, considering application letters and curriculum vitae (CVs), interviewing, and then making judgements as to who is the most appropriate person to appoint. The process can be costly, time consuming and, as many companies know, does not guarantee that the best person is appointed. A cynical view taken by a Human Resources Manager recently was that after an initial short listing, the chances of appointing the best candidate are much the same if the choice is made purely by a random selection, such as drawing lots, as they are when a complex selection procedure is undertaken.

The selection procedure, however, can be made much more reliable when psychometric testing is added. The test is a scientifically developed, objective measure of the candidate's suitability for a post. A job role is analysed for the types and levels of knowledge, understanding and skills it involves and then a series of tests can be devised to enable an appropriate match to be made and the best candidate appointed. Recruitment panels are not distracted by non-relevant characteristics of candidates, such as their charm or physical appearance. Candidates who have simply a better interview technique (perhaps because of a greater experience of unsuccessful interviews) are not given an advantage.

Those who devise these tests would not claim they should be administered in isolation, but they must be used in conjunction with interviews to add an extra dimension to recruitment procedures. These tests are entirely objective; all candidates are treated equally and any subjective prejudice is removed. Although psychometric testing is still relatively new, it has been developed over several years now and it has been proven that tests for cognitive ability, aptitude and enthusiasm can be highly accurate.

Many employers are now adopting psychometric testing because they are losing confidence in the more traditional tools of recruitment. The educational qualifications achieved by a candidate can give some indication of an overall academic level but as more people worldwide are gaining university degrees, employers are finding it more difficult to distinguish between levels of ability specific to a job role. Similarly, CVs can be misleading; they tend to focus on past experience whereas psychometric tests can uncover untapped potential. More significantly, people can be trained to write impressive CVs that can "manipulate" the truth to make them more attractive. People can also be trained to interview well whereas when they take psychometric tests they cannot hide from the probing questions that uncover specific aptitudes.

There is, therefore, a compelling case for psychometric testing. Used correctly, these tests can provide the insight into the potential candidates' suitability for a job. Their weakest area is that they can rarely measure how well candidates interact with other people. This can only be done fully when tests are combined with face-to-face experiences. However, when used as a part of a carefully thought out interview process, psychometric tests are accurate, cost effective and quick and easy to administer.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

TASK

Using this information, answer the following questions, **in your own words as far as possible**, to show your understanding of the points raised.

- (a) Describe what is meant by “psychometric testing”. (4 marks)
- (b) Why is the Human Resources Manager’s view of recruitment described as “cynical”? (4 marks)
- (c) What does the writer of the article say can distract interview panels? (3 marks)
- (d) What does the writer mean when he or she says that psychometric tests are “entirely objective”? (3 marks)
- (e) Why do some employers not have full confidence in candidates’ educational qualifications? (3 marks)
- (f) Why could CVs be considered as misleading? (3 marks)
- (g) Why is it believed that psychometric tests are more reliable than interviews? (2 marks)
- (h) Based on the ideas in the article or your own ideas, what would you say was the main weakness of psychometric testing? (3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You are employed as an administrator in the Sales Department of a large company, ASP Products. The sales staff of the company have just been issued with a new fleet of company cars. The Manager of the department, Mr Paulo Guimaraes, says this to you:

“You will know that all our sales representatives are about to be issued with new cars. They should be very pleased about this as they are the top of the range model, the Coimbre Cafard. They are a bit more expensive than the cars they had before but we have chosen very energy efficient vehicles with all kinds of safety and security measures.

“Now, because these are high performance vehicles, the insurance costs are normally quite high, but we have negotiated a good deal with our insurance company. It is important that we make sure that we make as few insurance claims as possible over the next year so we can maintain low costs.

“I’d like you to send a memo to all our sales representatives to remind them how important this insurance issue is. There is a customer liaison person of the insurance company who can give us some ideas about how to avoid claims; when you’ve spoken to this person, please pass on this advice. I’d like you to stress how fortunate the staff are to have these cars so we do expect them to take a little more care with them. Of course, our staff are busy people so keep the advice as concise as possible.”

You speak to Ms Nana Soubra, the Customer Liaison Manager of the insurance company, and this is the record of your conversation.

You: Good morning Ms Soubra. Thanks for speaking to me.

Ms S: It’s part of my job! If insurance claims are kept to a minimum, everyone benefits. Now, remind me what model of car we are talking about.

You: It’s the Coimbre Cafard. We are issuing the five-door hatchback version.

Ms S: Well, that’s a good start. This is an excellent model; the manufacturers have taken our advice and built in all kinds of security features. It is very difficult to break into the vehicle, so car thieves are out of luck!

You: Good. But I’m sure there are still measures that our staff can take.

Ms S: My goodness, yes. I’ve said that thieves can’t break into these cars very easily, but you’d be surprised how many people leave their keys in the cars. Thieves don’t have to break in. It would be helpful to remind everyone about this.

You: Yes – this seems obvious, but it is useful to know this.

Ms S: Well, a lot of my advice is really common sense. For example, it’s no secret that many accidents can be avoided if drivers simply follow the law. They shouldn’t go over speed limits; they should make sure that things like lights and windscreen wipers are always working, and they should never drive when under the influence of alcohol or drugs. I know you’ll need to be careful how you say this to your staff, as most drivers do respect the law, but it still should be said.

You: All the things you say are company rules as well, of course. But you mention security. Are these high performance cars a target for thieves?

Ms S: To some extent, yes. Thieves do know that it is difficult to break into this model and then drive it away, but opportunist thieves can always break in to steal items – laptop computers can be a particular target. It is vital that your staff do not leave items visible. If they can’t remove them, they should lock them out of sight. Thieves who break in can cause a lot of expensive damage to the car itself.

You: Of course. So they should keep valuables out of sight and never leave keys in the vehicle. Anything else?

Ms S: For security, it is always better to park these vehicles safely. If you have a garage at home, keep your car in it, and keep it locked. If you haven’t got a garage, you need to park where it is well lit – thieves like to work where it is dark! This applies to any parking you have to do, of course.

QUESTION 4 CONTINUED

- You: I know what you mean. Actually, my parents have a garage at their home but there's no room in it for the car. It's full of all kinds of stuff, mainly mine, I'm afraid.
- Ms S: Well, there's a job for you! I hope all of this is helpful. Basically, you need to remind your staff that these cars are valuable items. You should always keep safety and security as a primary objective.
- You: Yes, that's very helpful. Thanks a lot.

TASK

Write the memo as requested.

(Total 25 marks)