

November 2006

### Communication - Level 3

#### General Comments

This paper provided a straightforward test of Level 3 skills, and performed satisfactorily in differentiating between candidates of different abilities. The agreed pass mark was 28, reflecting the level at which candidates demonstrated sufficient competence in understanding, synthesis, expression of ideas and accuracy in written English.

Although the subject matter was close enough to candidates' experience to engage their interest, it was pleasing that few were tempted to introduce examples from their own experience rather than using the source material in answering the questions set. Nevertheless, a few were a little defensive and prone to argue largely from the student viewpoint when answering Question 5.

Question 1 required candidates to identify consequences of noise nuisance for students which proved straightforward as long as candidates confined themselves to that. Some spent too much time on unnecessary explanation or identification of consequences for residents. Better candidates demonstrate the ability to be both accurate and succinct when identifying points from the source documents, and this was evident again in Question 2. Weaker candidates lost marks through being insufficiently precise in identifying the causes of noise nuisance, since Document 1 was quite specific in stating that time of day, for example, was an important factor in determining where noise becomes a "nuisance". A few candidates identified causes mentioned in Document 2, for which they could not be credited with marks. Many also did not include in their explanations for the second part of the question any balancing arguments raised in Document 2, such as the views of Caresa or Anne Monaghan.

Most candidates were able to offer a satisfactory, if sometimes long-winded, interpretation of the meaning of the two images. However, several failed to realise that the prospective buyer of the lawnmower was not a student but a neighbour of the student. To obtain full marks for the second part of the question, candidates needed to be able to offer arguments regarding why the images did and did not support the text. In comparing the views of Anwar and Sylvia, better candidates were specific about the various issues on which they differed. Most candidates had a general awareness that Document 1 on the whole supported Anwar's point of view and Document 3 Sylvia's; the best answers demonstrated the awareness that the issue was more complex and that elements of each document might be more ambivalent. Presumably in the interest of ensuring that Question 5 was answered, some candidates did not attempt this question, and consequently sacrificed up to seven marks.

Once again, far too many candidates did not understand how to write a report, or indeed, apparently, what was meant by a report, producing instead letters, articles or essays. Exceptionally, some centres had taken the trouble to teach this skill, which was reflected in their candidates' answers to this question. Most candidates gained the marks available for style/structure and tone, though there were occasional lapses. The majority demonstrated an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of having students living in the area and of the consequences of noise nuisance but some, having reworked some of the material they had used in Question 1, did not consider the consequences for residents as well. Recommendations offered were often too general or unsuitable for the purposes of the report bearing in mind the target audience. The standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar was rarely more than satisfactory for candidates at this level.

#### Recommendation to Centres

Centres are reminded that at Level 3, mastery of the basic rules of spelling, punctuation and grammar is essential, and it should not be assumed that all candidates studying at Level 3 in academic or vocational subjects will necessarily have this ability. Ensure ALL

candidates who are entered for the Communication Key Skill at this level have the appropriate skills and knowledge to allow them to be successful. Candidates should be given opportunities to practice techniques which commonly feature in Level 3 tests: identifying and briefly summarising the main points of a text; analysing images used to illustrate text and evaluating their relevance and suitability; synthesising viewpoints from different documents. Centres where coaching is provided in the conventions of writing letters, reports and articles give their candidates a considerable advantage when approaching the test. For example, guided exercises in writing reports for different purposes and audiences would be most useful.

Coaching in examination technique would also help to ensure that candidates perform to the best of their abilities. Poor time management sometimes prevents otherwise capable candidates from being successful. Answers to questions, or parts of questions, asking for simple identification of information will benefit from being concise. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading the question carefully and answering all its parts. Guidance should be given in reading and interpreting the vocabulary typically used in framing questions. For instance, where a candidate is asked to "assess", "explain" or "consider" the "extent to which" one argument or viewpoint is supported by other information provided, this indicates that more than one viewpoint is possible and all should be considered in their answer.

Chief Examiner

Communication