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# **Introduction to Business Communication**

**NQF**

## **Subject Examiner's Report**

**Unit Title:** Introduction to Business Communication

**Unit Code:** 1.2 IBC

**NQF Level:** NQF Certificate

**Session:** December 2016

## Question 1

**(a)** A customer has contacted your company to complain politely about the poor customer service they felt they received on a recent visit to your store. Explain two benefits and two disadvantages of replying to the customer:

- (i)** By email;
- (ii)** By telephone;
- (iii)** By letter

**(15 marks)**

**(b)** Describe how an open plan layout in an office can both benefit and hinder communication. **(10 marks)**

### Learning Outcome

1.1.2

8.8.4

## 1. Comments on learners' performance

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A popular question that elicited a good response overall, though one could have wished for rather less repetition re issues of time/cost/technical issues in part (a). A surprising number of candidates misunderstood the term 'open plan' and described the very opposite of what was expected.

## 2. Mark scheme

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**(a)** Up to 5 marks max for each part:

**(i)** A reply by e-mail is fast, and it can include as much detail as I would need to include. I can attach relevant documents such as a written apology/explanation from a.n.other. I can revise what I have written, and check it for accuracy and to ensure that I have used an appropriate, helpful tone. Although this e-mail would be personal, it is less personal than a phone call, and I may have no absolute proof that the customer has received it, even if I set an 'opened e-mail' alert.

**(ii)** This is the most personal approach by far, and will allow me to create a rapport with the customer. Since the customer has not been abusive in making the complaint, I should not be worried about making the call, as I will not expect a hostile reaction. The telephone has an immediate feedback that written communication lacks, and I can judge by the tone of the other person's voice how my call is being received. However, the telephone does not allow me to check what I am saying, and it is possible to miss out important information, or even to say something that I ought not to say.

**(iii)** A letter would show that I am taking the customer's complaint very seriously, and respecting the customer. It takes time and effort to compose a letter, and I would hope that this would be appreciated. However, it might be too formal for a minor complaint, and risks escalating the matter beyond where it should go. Letters are also slow, and the customer could imagine that I am ignoring the matter. A customer who sends an e-mail will expect a very prompt reply.

**Maximum marks for (a) 15 marks**

**(b)** 1 mark per benefit to max 5 and 1 mark per hindrance to max 5. 0 marks for opposites unless wording significantly different. Correct answers may refer to either staff or managers or both.

An open plan layout, where the office space is not divided into separate cubicles, can create a sense of teamwork in the shared space. Communication is easy, because staff can see each other and can even go quickly to a colleague's desk with a query or if help is needed. Most open plan offices share a LAN, and have equipment such as photocopiers available to all staff.

However, open plan offices can be noisy, and there are many potential distractions, e.g. people talking, phones ringing, etc. Colleagues are more likely to spend time chatting than if they were isolated, and privacy is very limited. A manager who works in an open plan office will be very accessible, and end up wasting time dealing with trivial matters that staff bring to him or her. Managers can often lose the respect of the staff if seen as being on the same level.

## 3. Recommendations

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Tutors should give specific guidance that assists candidates in avoiding repetition in answers.

The advantages and disadvantages of different workplace environments and layouts should be discussed and exemplified.

#### 4. Model Answer

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**(a)(i)** A reply by e-mail is fast, and it can include as much detail as I would need to include. I can attach relevant documents such as a written apology or explanation. I can revise what I have written, and check it for accuracy and to ensure that I have used an appropriate, helpful tone. Although this e-mail would be personal, it is less personal than a phone call, and I may have no absolute proof that the customer has received it, even if I set an 'opened e-mail' alert.

**(ii)** This is the most personal approach, and will allow me to create a rapport with the customer. Since the customer has not been abusive in making the complaint, I should not be worried about making the call, as I will not expect a hostile reaction. The telephone has an immediate feedback that written communication lacks, and I can judge by the tone of the other person's voice how my call is being received. However, the telephone does not allow me to check what I am saying, and it is possible to miss out important information, or even to say something that I ought not to say.

**(iii)** A letter would show that I am taking the customer's complaint very seriously, and respecting the customer. It takes time and effort to compose a letter, and I would hope that this would be appreciated. However, it might be too formal for a minor complaint, and risks escalating the matter beyond where it should go. Letters are also slow and can be lost or damaged, and the customer could imagine that I am ignoring the matter. A customer who sends an e-mail will expect a very prompt reply.

**(b)** An open plan layout, where the office space is not divided into separate cubicles, can create a sense of teamwork in the shared space. Communication is easy, because staff can see each other and can even go quickly to a colleague's desk with a query or if help is needed. Most open plan offices share a LAN, and have equipment such as photocopiers available to all staff.

However, open plan offices can be noisy, and there are many potential distractions, e.g. people talking, phones ringing, etc. Colleagues are more likely to spend time chatting than if they were isolated, and privacy is very limited. A manager who works in an open plan office will be very accessible, and end up wasting time dealing with trivial matters that staff bring to him or her. Managers can often lose the respect of the staff if seen as being on the same level.

#### Examiner's tips

**AVOID REPEATING YOURSELF IN AN ANSWER.**  
Study your workplace. How does its layout help or hinder communication?

## Question 2

You have seen a job advertisement for an assistant manager to work in the local branch of a national clothing store. The advertisement states that CVs (or resumés) are not required. Write a fully blocked letter to the HR Department applying for the job.

### Learning Outcome

2.2.1

2.2.1.3

## 1. Comments on learners' performance

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A very popular question that elicited a good number of competent responses. The required layout of a formal, fully blocked letter had clearly been well taught and consequently most candidates scored highly on 'Top & Tail'. Responses followed a similar pattern in terms of Content, the only weakness being a lack of imagination re 'knowledge of the organisation' and 'match of skills/experience to employer's needs'. It was encouraging to note that 'formal tone' was usually a given and that candidates paragraphed their work appropriately. Responses were markedly succinct and relevant, though one could have wished for more examples of candidates 'selling' themselves in confident and enthusiastic terms.

## 2. Mark scheme

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### *Top and Tail to max 7*

1 mark each for:

1. Fully blocked layout aligned with left hand margin AND properly spaced AND neat;
2. Name and address of sender;
3. HR Department + address;
4. Date in the right place;
5. Appropriate subject line that is presented with reasonable space after the salutation;
6. Dear Sir or Madam or valid alternatives, e.g To whom it may concern, or Dear HR Department. 0 marks if specific names are given in the salutation;
7. Yours faithfully + name

### *Style to max 8*

1 mark each for:

Formal tone; logical structure; paragraphs properly used; succinctness; relevance; sense of applicant 'selling' himself/herself using active voice, conveying confidence and enthusiasm; presentation.

### *Content to max 10*

Position applying for;  
Reason(s) for applying;  
Specific, relevant personal details;  
Specific, relevant qualifications;  
Relevant experience;  
Knowledge of organisation to which applying;  
Match of skills/experience to employer's needs;  
Relevant personal qualities;  
Aims/ambitions;  
Concluding remarks.

Show marks as  $T + S + C$

## 3. Recommendations

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Tutors should continue the good work done to date re the layout features of formal communication. Perhaps more emphasis could be given to the use of specific, emotive language to sell, advertise, persuade etc.

## 4. Model Answer

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Daniella Boron

261 Monaldo Ave  
District 4  
Maun

10 December 2016

HR Department  
Gillo Fashions  
Central Square  
Maun

Dear Sir or Madam

Post of Assistant Manager

I hereby wish to apply for the above post, which I saw advertised in the Maun Daily News on 7 December. I am 36 years old, married with two school age children, and live locally.

I gained my ABE Advanced Diploma in Retail Management from Maun College ten years ago, and have added to this qualification by attending various courses in Fashion Design, Customer Service and Managing Staff.

Since leaving College, I have worked in a variety of roles in fashion outlets, both on the shop floor and in junior management positions. Two years ago, I was appointed to an Assistant Manager's post with the Kyerna fashion chain, with responsibilities for stock control, window display, and staff training. You may be aware that the Kyerna store in Maun won an industry award last year for its innovative approach to recruiting and training new staff, a scheme I pioneered and developed with the support of senior managers. I am now keen to further my career and believe the post on offer would enable me to develop my talents and abilities on a wider stage. Gillo Fashions have an international reputation with stores in many of the world's leading cities. Its recently introduced range of designs for children is proving very popular, and I would very much welcome the opportunity to join the company and play a significant role in its continuing success.

I believe my skills and personal qualities make me an ideal candidate for the position of Assistant Manager. I am a friendly, outgoing person who enjoys dealing with customers and staff alike. I am computer and financially literate, and have gained relevant experience in managing junior staff, and in the role of Duty Manager when required. I am well used to liaising with fashion buyers and designers, and enjoy creating displays that promote clothes to their best advantage.

With my fluency in French and English, I can better communicate with visitors and tourists, and I am currently learning Spanish on a correspondence course. I believe I have the ability to assume a senior management role at a future time in my career, and would see the position offered as an ideal opportunity to gain further, invaluable experience with a large, well renowned, international fashion retailer.

I very much hope that you find my letter of application for the role of Assistant Manager of interest, and that I will have the opportunity to better elaborate on my skills and qualities in an interview. I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours faithfully  
Daniella Boron

#### Examiner's tips

If the opportunity arises, use LANGUAGE to sell yourself, to sell a product or to advertise a service.

### Question 3

- (a) Explain why a manager might want to arrange a briefing meeting in the workplace. **(5 marks)**
- (b) Your company would like to know its customers' opinions about a product that it recently began selling.
- (i) Identify three channels that it can use to gather the information it requires. **(3 marks)**
- (ii) Identify one possible disadvantage to the company of using each of the channels you have chosen. **(3 marks)**
- (c)(i) Explain what is meant by 'identity theft'. **(2 marks)**
- (ii) Describe a situation in which it can occur. **(2 marks)**
- (iii) State how you can prevent it from occurring. **(2 marks)**
- (d) Much of our face to face communication in the workplace occurs in 'chance meetings' with colleagues at all levels and by making new contacts. Describe four possible benefits and four possible disadvantages for a company of 'chance face to face meetings' in the workplace. **(8 marks)**

### Learning Outcome

- 1.1.1
- 3.3.3
- 1.1.2
- 7.7.9
- 3.3.2

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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- (a) Most candidates were well able to list a number of reasons why a briefing meeting might be called in a workplace. (b)(i) Channels such as questionnaires and interviews bulked large in the answers but the disadvantages (b)(ii) were often less convincing, with frequent references made to customers' illiteracy. (c) Weaker candidates were unable to move beyond the idea of theft of physical possessions but a majority of answers drew the correct link and evidenced how it might occur and be prevented. (d) posed issues for almost all candidates, the majority of whom failed to spot the significance of the word 'chance' in the question. Consequently, most answers were concentrated on *planned* face to face meetings/conversations such as interviews and conferences. Overall, very few marks were gained here.

### 2. Mark scheme

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- (a) 1 mark per point to max 5:

To give workers company news; to give instructions; the expectations for that day, e.g. sales targets; to pass on important information, e.g. a change in working practices or a reminder about certain Health and Safety issues; a quick pep talk on an area of goods or service that needs to be emphasised; single out a member of staff for praise; to motivate staff; to ensure that all staff get the same information at the same time; to allow staff to seek clarification; to help create a sense of teamwork.

**Maximum marks for (a) 5 marks**

- (b)(i) 1 mark per correct channel to max 3:

Written questionnaire; questions asked in person/interviews/surveys; requests for information to be supplied in letter/report form.

- (ii) 1 mark per relevant disadvantage to max 3.

Written questionnaire – many people find forms difficult to complete; poorly worded questions may not be understood/may not elicit the required information; allow little opportunity for expression of personal attitudes/individual differences; people are reluctant to complete them.

Questions asked in person/interviews/surveys – expensive in terms of manpower; time consuming.

Enquiries by telephone – people dislike being bothered by random/unsolicited calls; dislike giving information to an unknown voice; more difficult to gauge validity of responses because of lack of body language.

Requests for information to be supplied in letter/report form – many people dislike writing letters; requests may be discarded as 'spam'/'junk' mail; recipients may expect some 'reward' for their participation.

**Maximum marks for (b) 6 marks**

- (c) (i) 2 marks max for quality of explanation.

Identity theft occurs when someone steals your personal information<sup>1</sup> and uses it for fraudulent purposes<sup>2</sup>.  
(ii) 2 marks max for quality of description.

It usually happens when you reveal PIN numbers or passwords/pass codes on the internet<sup>1</sup>. You may be deceived by/respond to a 'phishing' e-mail from fraudsters pretending to be reputable companies asking for your personal details<sup>2</sup>; some scams involve fraudsters taking control of your computer to obtain details you may have stored<sup>2</sup>.

(iii) 2 marks max for accuracy of preventative measures.

Never give out/store security information in full<sup>1</sup>, or divulge details on websites that do not appear to be genuine<sup>2</sup>.

**Maximum marks for (c) 6 marks**

**(d)** 1 mark per advantage to max 4 + 1 mark per disadvantage to max 4. 0 marks for opposites unless the language used is significantly different.

You can by-pass 'the usual channels'/avoid making an appointment or having to wait until the other person is free; speaking directly may enable you to clear up a matter straight away, which helps efficiency.

Chance conversations often happen under time pressure and as such they can help those involved to reach a decision more rapidly.

Minor issues can be raised, discussed and resolved in passing, without wasting time calling a special meeting.

Having a few words with someone in passing maintains contact at a human level, important for senior staff when dealing with subordinates; can help develop a relationship of trust and can suggest senior staff have a genuine interest in those working for them.

Because these meetings are unplanned, both parties may be in a hurry and therefore not have the time to consider all their options; messages can be wrongly expressed/misunderstood; decisions taken under pressure of time may not be the best ones.

Unlikely that both parties are adequately prepared with all of the information to hand; therefore discussion may be limited; the listener may be prejudiced against a later, fuller discussion if the matter was raised in an incomplete way in the first place.

In an unplanned meeting, you cannot structure the conversation, leading to incomplete/inaccurate communication.

There are good and bad times to discuss certain issues; good communication should not be dependent on luck; better to stick to clearly defined meeting procedures, unless you are sure how the other person will react.

**Maximum marks for (d) 8 marks**

### 3. Recommendations

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The problems that some candidates had with the concept of 'identity theft' should serve to remind tutors that students are not necessarily comfortable writing on topics related to communications technology. Student familiarity with activities such as gaming and social networking does not automatically translate into knowledge and understanding of wider issues in business communications. There needs to be specific subject teaching and guidance.

### 4. Model Answer

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**(a)** A manager might want to give workers company news, give them instructions, the expectations for that day, such as sales targets, or to pass on important information like a change in working practices or a reminder about certain Health and Safety issues. The manager might want to give a quick pep talk on an area of goods or service that needs to be emphasised, single out a member of staff for praise or motivate staff. A briefing meeting helps to ensure that all staff get the same information at the same time and allows them to seek clarification; it can help create a sense of teamwork.

**(b)(i)** The company can use written questionnaires. Staff can be employed to ask questions and interview customers in person or conduct surveys. The company can contact customers with requests for comments to be supplied in a letter or report form.

(ii) However, many people find forms difficult to complete and poorly worded questions may not be understood or gather the required information. Written questionnaires allow little opportunity for the expression of personal attitudes or individual differences. Often, people are reluctant to complete them. It can be expensive in terms of manpower and time consuming to ask questions in person or in interviews and surveys.

People dislike being bothered by random, unsolicited calls on the telephone; they dislike giving information to an unknown voice. It can be more difficult to gauge the truthfulness of responses given on the phone because of the lack of body language.

Many people dislike writing letters and any requests may be discarded as 'spam' or 'junk' mail. Also the recipients may expect some 'reward' for their participation.

**(c) (i)** Identity theft occurs when someone steals your personal information and uses it for fraudulent purposes.

It usually happens when you reveal PIN numbers or passwords on the internet. You may be deceived by or respond to a 'phishing' e-mail from fraudsters pretending to be reputable companies asking for your personal details. Some scams involve fraudsters taking control of your computer to obtain details you may have stored.

Never give out or store security information in full, or divulge details on websites that do not appear to be genuine. Change passwords regularly, make them quite complicated with a mix of letters, numbers and symbols, and do not use the same password for different purposes.

**(d)** You can by-pass 'the usual channels' of communication and avoid making an appointment or having to wait until the other person is free. Speaking directly in a 'chance' face to face meeting may enable you to clear up a matter straight away, which helps efficiency. Chance conversations often happen under time pressure and as such they can help those involved to reach a decision more rapidly. Minor issues can be raised, discussed and resolved in passing, without wasting time calling a special meeting. Having a few words with someone in passing maintains contact at a human level, which can be important for senior staff when dealing with subordinates. It can help develop a relationship of trust and can suggest senior staff have a genuine interest in those working for them.

Because these meetings are unplanned, both parties may be in a hurry and therefore not have the time to consider all their options. Messages can be wrongly expressed or misunderstood. Decisions taken under pressure of time may not be the best ones. It is unlikely that both parties are adequately prepared with all of the information to hand and therefore discussion may be limited. The listener may be prejudiced against a later, fuller discussion if the matter was raised in an incomplete way in the first place. In an unplanned meeting, you cannot structure the conversation, leading to incomplete or inaccurate communication.

There are good and bad times to discuss certain issues; good communication should not be dependent on luck; it may be better to stick to clearly defined meeting procedures, unless you are sure how the other person will react.

### **Examiner's tips**

**KEEP UP TO DATE.** Complement what you learn about communications technology in the classroom with what is being written and talked about in the media and in the workplace.



#### Question 4

- (a) Explain what is meant by 'personal space' and describe why it can sometimes be a barrier to communication. **(7 marks)**
- (b) Explain the meaning of each of these key components in the Communications Cycle:
- (i) Information;
  - (ii) Encoding;
  - (iii) The channel;
  - (iv) The purpose;
  - (v) Decoding;
  - (vi) Feedback. **(12 marks)**
- (c) Explain what is meant by the term 'upward vertical communication'. Identify two advantages and two disadvantages for a company of using such a system. **(6 marks)**

#### Learning Outcome

4.4.2.5

9.9.6

9.9.2

#### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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(a) A surprising number of candidates struggled with this question. 'Personal space' was rarely discussed in terms of body language, with candidates more often choosing to explore the use of office space and desks rather than the signals sent to people we know/don't know or like/dislike. The phrase 'comfort zone' often appeared but was rarely explored in the context of business communication.

Some of the weakest candidates could not explain the basic features of the Communications Cycle. Most candidates were sufficiently knowledgeable to gain the first mark for a component but too often failed to develop the point for the second mark. Explanations of 'encoding' and 'decoding' sometimes lacked clarity and a number of candidates could not distinguish between 'medium' and 'channel'.

Most candidates had sufficient understanding of the term 'upward vertical communication' to be able to offer an explanation and identify the system's advantages and disadvantages.

#### 2. Mark scheme

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(a) Up to 3 marks for the quality of the explanation + 1 mark per point for potential barriers to max 4. An aspect of body language<sup>1</sup>, 'personal space' is the amount of space/distance around us that we need in order to feel secure<sup>2</sup>. It can also be called a 'comfort zone'<sup>3</sup>. We can feel uncomfortable/disturbed<sup>1</sup>, even threatened<sup>2</sup> if someone intrudes into our personal space by approaching too closely; we can feel bullied/intimidated<sup>3</sup>; consequently, we may dislike the 'intruder'<sup>4</sup> and not co-operate in the conversation<sup>4</sup>.

**Maximum marks for (a) 7 marks**

(b) Up to 2 marks for the quality of each explanation:

(i) The actual material/data which the sender intends to communicate to the receiver; not necessarily factual; may be an idea, opinion, or combination of fact/opinion.

(ii) The process by which the sender puts the information into a form suitable for sending; will usually be spoken or written language; could be non verbal/body language; could be photograph/film/drawing; the sender must decide the best medium for the receiver to understand the information and then put it into the most suitable channel; correct encoding is crucial to correct understanding.

(iii) The physical means by which the message is communicated; e.g. it can be a notice board for a written communication, a personal interview for an oral communication, or body language for visual communication.

(iv) The main reason why the communication has been undertaken; can be to inform, to influence or to initiate action, or a combination of these. The purpose of the communication will affect how the information is encoded and the media and channels used.

(v) The process by which the recipient interprets the meaning of the message; it may not be the same interpretation intended by the sender; the result of decoding is what the *recipient* understands the message to mean; the sender is responsible for ensuring the message is sent in a way which will allow the recipient to understand it in the same way as the sender intended.

(vi) The receiver's response to the message; allows the sender to judge whether the message has/has not achieved its intended effect. Can be positive, e.g. agreement, or negative, e.g. disagreement; negative

feedback can be sent even when the message is understood, e.g. reads/hears smoking is dangerous but continues smoking.

**Maximum marks for (b) 12 marks**

**(c)** Up to 2 marks for the quality/accuracy of the explanation + 1 mark per advantage to max 2 + 1 mark per disadvantage to max 2. 0 marks for opposites unless the language is significantly different.

Messages/requests/reports on progress/problems being experienced, etc flow upwards along the line of command; they are not orders or instructions.

Upward vertical communication helps employees to relieve tension; share pressures; gain sense of participating in the enterprise.

Risk of something important being filtered out at any stage; criticisms/problems may be watered down so as not to antagonise those at a higher level; people may not want to be the bearers of bad news to superiors.

**Maximum marks for (c) 6 marks**

### 3. Recommendations

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Tutors can encourage students to observe and discuss how they use proxemics in their day to day lives, moving closer to people they like and away from people they dislike. These findings can then be further examined in the context of business communication using terms such as respect, intrusive, threatening etc.

### 4. Model Answer

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(a) An aspect of body language, 'personal space' is the amount of space around us that we need in order to feel secure – our 'comfort zone'. This space will be bigger or smaller depending on how much confidence a person has. We can feel uncomfortable, even threatened, if someone intrudes into it by approaching too closely. Some people try to dominate or bully others by deliberately moving very close to them. The person who feels pressured may not co-operate in the conversation. People you know and like, e.g. family members, are allowed to approach closer than strangers or business colleagues. Keeping a distance that is close, but not too close, shows that you want to do business with the other person, and also that you respect them.

**(b) (i)** The actual material or data which the sender intends to communicate to the receiver; it is not necessarily factual; it may be an idea, opinion, or combination of fact/opinion.

(ii) The process by which the sender puts the information into a form suitable for sending; it will usually be spoken or written language but it could be non verbal or body language, a photograph, film or drawing. The sender must decide the best medium for the receiver to understand the information and then put it into the most suitable channel; correct encoding is crucial to correct understanding.

(iii) The physical means by which the message is communicated; e.g. it can be a notice board for a written communication, a personal interview for an oral communication, or body language for visual communication.

(iv) The main reason why the communication has been undertaken. It can be to inform, to influence or to initiate action, or a combination of these. The purpose of the communication will affect how the information is encoded and the media and channels used.

(v) The process by which the recipient interprets the meaning of the message. It may not be the same interpretation intended by the sender; the result of decoding is what the *recipient* understands the message to mean. The sender is responsible for ensuring the message is sent in a way which will allow the recipient to understand it in the same way as the sender intended.

(vi) The receiver's response to the message. It allows the sender to judge whether the message has or has not achieved its intended effect. Feedback can be positive, e.g. agreement, or negative, e.g. disagreement. Negative feedback can be sent even when the message is understood, for example when someone is told that smoking is dangerous but continues smoking.

**(c)** Messages or requests or reports on progress or problems being experienced, etc flow upwards along the line of command in the company or organisation. They are not orders or instructions.

Upward vertical communication helps employees to relieve tension, share pressures, whilst gaining a sense of participating in the enterprise.

However, in this system there is a risk of something important being filtered out at any stage. Criticisms and problems may be watered down so as not to antagonise or alienate those at a higher level. People may not want to be the bearers of bad news to superiors and therefore the message may not be passed on.

Assuming that the correct message is eventually received, it may take some time for the feedback to pass back down through the same levels.

### **Examiner's tips**

Consider your own body language when in the company of a person you like/know well and someone you dislike/don't know well.

### Question 5

(a) Explain, using three examples, how differences of culture between two people can become a barrier to communication. In each case, suggest a way in which that barrier can be overcome. **(9 marks)**

(b) You have been given the responsibility of organising the reception area of your company's offices so that visitors will feel welcome. Describe how you will achieve this. **(10 marks)**

(c)  
(i) Explain three ways in which time can become a barrier to successful communication. **(3 marks)**  
(ii) Describe how these barriers can be overcome. **(3 marks)**

#### Learning Outcome

5.5.4

8.8.5

5.5.8

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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(a) A popular question, with candidates correctly identifying language, dress, food and customs as potential barriers whilst offering valid, practical solutions. (b) Most candidates handled this well; only those answers that concentrated on the role and/or appearance of the receptionist scored poorly. (c) Rather too many simplistic responses that made reference to being late for meetings, exams etc, but better candidates identified the required barriers and how they could be overcome.

### 2. Mark scheme

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(a) 1 mark per difference + 1 mark per resultant problem + 1 mark per solution. Do not credit the same vocabulary more than once. Be generous in allowing what constitutes a cultural difference.

People who speak different languages will not easily understand each other. The solution is to use a common language, or find an interpreter.

People who have different customs can misunderstand each other. In Japan, a cleared dinner plate suggests a lack of food but in Western Europe it suggests the diner enjoyed the meal. This can be overcome by visitors learning about the customs of the country they are visiting.

People who dress in particular ways can cause offence by dressing inappropriately for a particular occasion. For example, in some cultures it is proper to wear white garments when going to a funeral; in other cultures black is traditionally worn, and the wearing of white could be considered disrespectful. This can be overcome simply by asking someone what is the correct colour to wear.

**Maximum marks for (a) 9 marks**

(b) 1 mark per point to max 10. Q refers specifically to the area, so 0 marks for comments re the receptionist.

Reception area should be as airy and bright as possible; should be decorated in warm colours so that visitors will feel comfortable; desk should be centrally placed so that visitors will be in no doubt as to where to go for help; furniture should be of good quality, comfortable and of sufficient quantity for needs; reading materials should be provided if visitors have to wait.; flowers help to create a welcoming ambience; pictures on the walls showing the products or other aspects of the company will help to 'set the scene'; a drinks machine should be available for visitors to refresh themselves; clear signage indicating exits and facilities should be visible.

**Maximum marks for (b) 10 marks**

(c) (i) 1 mark per explanation to max 3. Do not credit the same vocabulary more than once.

A message delivered when the recipient is busy or at lunch or at the end of the working day will be at the wrong time, and the recipient will not be able to concentrate on the message.

A person who makes a phone call to another country with a big time difference might be calling in the middle of the night and the call will not be answered.

A person who demands an immediate answer to a question does not give the recipient enough time to think about the right answer, and will probably not receive as helpful a response.

(ii) 1 mark per relevant solution to max 3. Do not credit the same vocabulary more than once.

The sender has a responsibility to check and avoid inconvenient/inappropriate times if possible.

Consulting one of the various world clock time zone planners will help the sender make a suitable choice.

If a receiver is given sufficient time, the answer is likely to be more satisfying.

**Maximum marks for (b) 6 marks**

### 3. Recommendations

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On the evidence of the answers seen, tutors are preparing students appropriately for questions about cultural diversity, and relevant examples from different media sources are being utilised.

Students should be encouraged to differentiate between place and person, eg reception and receptionist, classroom and teacher.

### 4. Model Answer

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**(a)** People who speak different languages will not easily understand each other. The solution is to use a common language, or find an interpreter. People who have different customs can misunderstand each other. In Japan, a cleared dinner plate suggests a lack of food but in Western Europe it suggests the diner enjoyed the meal. This can be overcome by visitors learning about the customs of the country they are visiting. People who dress in particular ways can cause offence by dressing inappropriately for a particular occasion. For example, in some cultures it is proper to wear white garments when going to a funeral; in other cultures black is traditionally worn, and the wearing of white could be considered disrespectful. This can be overcome simply by asking someone what is the correct colour to wear.

**(b)** The Reception area should be as airy and bright as possible. It should be decorated in warm colours so that visitors will feel comfortable. The Reception desk should be centrally placed so that visitors will be in no doubt as to where to go for help. Furniture should be of good quality and comfortable. Reading materials such as magazines and newspapers should be provided if visitors have to wait. Flowers help to create a welcoming ambience; pictures on the walls showing the products or other aspects of the company will help to 'set the scene'. A drinks machine should be available for visitors to refresh themselves. Nowadays, visitors will expect wi-fi access so that they can use phones and laptops etc. Clear signs should indicate exits, facilities and emergency arrangements..

**(c) (i)** A message delivered when the recipient is busy or at lunch or at the end of the working day will be at the wrong time, and the recipient will not be able to concentrate on the message.

A person who makes a phone call to another country with a big time difference might be calling in the middle of the night and the call will not be answered.

A person who demands an immediate answer to a question does not give the recipient enough time to think about the right answer, and will probably not receive as helpful a response.

**(ii)** The sender has a responsibility to check and avoid inconvenient or inappropriate times if possible.

Consulting one of the various world clock time zone planners will help the sender make a suitable choice.

If a receiver is given sufficient time, the answer is likely to be more satisfying.

#### Examiner's tips

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Look for examples of cultural diversity and potential barriers in media forms such as adverts and films – and be prepared to use them where relevant in your answers.

## Question 6

You have been part of a team carrying out research into the canteen facilities at Sanrest College. A colleague has passed the following document to you, as a draft of the research.

The canteen at Sanrest College has been the subject of an increasing number of complaints. We have been asked to look at the problem and to offer some solutions as to how the situation can be improved. We have spent several days in the canteen area, sampling the food and drink on offer, and talking to College students and to canteen staff.

The canteen was built for an original student population of 2,000. The College now has almost 5,000 students and the canteen is clearly too small to cater for this number. Building a new, larger canteen is too costly. However, a substantial canteen extension could be built at a much more reasonable cost. We believe that the main aim of providing an attractive, fit for purpose extension would cost 325,000 Rupees.

Whilst the cramped conditions of the present canteen are a source of dissatisfaction, students also complained about having to queue for a long time to order their food and be served. If students are not served in time, they either miss their classes or leave the food they have paid for. The canteen staff are obviously working under extreme pressure and we witnessed several quarrels between staff and students. Employing extra staff, especially at busy times, is a possibility that management might like to consider if the budget allows. The canteen does not follow the example of other Colleges who offer part-time jobs to their own students. Because Sanrest College has many students enrolled on hospitality and cookery courses, this could be worth investigating further. We estimate that the College needs to spend about 50,000 extra per year to improve staffing levels in the canteen.

The present staff are not well dressed. Standard uniforms would cost 10,000R per year, and would lead to improvements in staff unity, identity, motivation and standards of personal hygiene.

The present management team lacks focus and leadership. Offering a salary of 20,000R would attract a qualified and experienced manager who could be supported by a food quality inspector, a senior cashier and perhaps a Chief of Staff to monitor and supervise the canteen staff. 60,000R would cover the annual salaries for these three senior staff.

The present menu for students is necessarily limited by the need to serve the greatest number of people in the shortest period of time and by the inadequate cooking facilities which urgently need to be replaced and updated. Offering the same items on the menu for consecutive days is certainly not good practice. There is very little provision for vegetarian students or for those who have special dietary needs. Once they have been served, students often find that all of the tables and chairs – many in a very poor state of repair – are occupied. This often results in students carrying their refreshments out of the canteen and into other, less suitable areas of the College, thus contributing to an increase in litter problems.

New chairs and tables would help create a more welcoming environment. Cleanliness will be a key concern. There should be extra cleaners employed to maintain neat and tidy floors and tables and canteen utensils. Students suggested that they would be happy for a small rise in canteen prices if they could see that the additional revenue was being invested in improved facilities. They would also like to see a suggestion box in the canteen area that would enable them to offer both ideas and complaints.

**Required:** Summarise the content and present it in the form of a report in no more than 150 words, excluding headings.

### *Learning Outcome*

2.2.2

6.6.1

6.6.3

6.6.4

6.6.5

## 1. Comments on learners' performance

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Only a tiny minority of candidates attempted this question. Of these, not one gained a mark for Headings, suggesting that report writing (LO2, AC2.2 'Prepare reports, their structure and content') had not featured large in the teaching of the subject. The question also expected candidates to summarise the original document, a regular feature of these exam papers but one that did not appeal to the majority of candidates.

## 2. Mark scheme

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**HEADINGS:** Up to 5 marks, 1 per correct heading (synonyms are acceptable, e.g. Task for Brief or Methods for Procedure)

**CONTENT:** Up to 16 for relevant points (as noted in model answer) made within the word limit. Do not count anything beyond the phrase in which the 150<sup>th</sup> word appears. Do not count headings in this total. For an answer that is largely copied, max for this section is 8. For an answer that is completely copied, max is 0.

**STYLE:** 4 if task completed within word limit, along with good selection of material & original vocabulary.

3: Within the word limit but including more than one piece of irrelevant information.

2: An honest attempt, but not achieving its purpose. Over word limit or too short.

1: Slight signs of a basic competence. Poor selection of material, heavy reliance on passage. Much is copied.

0: Has no idea how to tackle this task.

Record marks as H + C + S.

## 3. Recommendations

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Writing a Report and summarising information would seem to pose difficulties for students at this level. Tutors could profitably refer to the relevant sections in the Study Manual for additional guidance and examples.

## 4. Model Answer

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**BRIEF:** To improve canteen facilities<sup>1</sup> at Sanrest College.

**PROCEDURE:** Observation<sup>2</sup> and interviews<sup>3</sup>.

**FINDINGS:** Canteen is too small for the number of students<sup>4</sup>. There are long queues to be served<sup>5</sup>. Staff are working under great pressure<sup>6</sup>. There are weaknesses in the management team<sup>7</sup>. Cooking facilities are inadequate<sup>8</sup>. The menu is limited and repetitive<sup>9</sup>. Canteen furniture is inadequate<sup>10</sup> in both quality and quantity.

**CONCLUSION:** Canteen needs enlarging<sup>11</sup>. Additional staff, including senior managers, are needed<sup>12</sup>. Staff should wear uniforms<sup>13</sup>. New cooking equipment and canteen furniture is required<sup>14</sup>. Higher prices could help fund the improvements<sup>15</sup>.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Build an extension on the adjoining land<sup>16</sup>. Employ extra staff<sup>16</sup> especially at busy times. Consider taking on student workers<sup>16</sup>. Issue canteen staff with uniforms<sup>16</sup>. Employ a new manager, food quality inspector, senior cashier and Chief of Staffs<sup>16</sup>. Renew the kitchen equipment<sup>16</sup> and canteen tables and chairs<sup>16</sup>.

### Examiner's tips

When writing a Report, remember:

HEADINGS

CONTENT

STYLE

## Question 7

You have been invited for a job interview at a local company for the post of receptionist.

**(a) (i)** Describe how you will prepare for the interview, in order to make the best possible impression. **(10 marks)**

**(ii)** State five ways that you can conduct yourself during the interview, in order to continue making a good impression **(5 marks)**

**(iii)** During the interview, you are asked why the role of receptionist is vital to the success of the business. Explain how you would answer this question. **(5 marks)**

**(b)** Explain what a spreadsheet is and describe the process of creating a new spreadsheet on a computer. **(5 marks)**

*Learning Outcome*

8.8.1

4.4.1

4.4.2

8.8.5

7.7.8

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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A popular question that elicited many good responses to parts (a) and (b). Unfortunately, a number of quite able candidates failed to distinguish between the 'before' and 'during' elements of the task. Answers to (c) were generally competent with frequent reference being made to 'first impressions' and 'the face of the company'. The idea of the receptionist having a positive or negative effect on clients/customers with the resultant consequences for the organisation could have been explored/developed in more detail.

(d) met with a mixed response: most candidates could explain what a spreadsheet is but one might have wished for more accurate/detailed descriptions of the process involved in creating one.

### 2. Mark scheme

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**(a) (i)** 1 mark per point to max 10

I will research the company<sup>1</sup>, using their website if they have one<sup>2</sup>. I will consult other related internet sources that may contain views about the company<sup>3</sup>. This will help me prepare questions for the interview panel<sup>4</sup>. I will ask someone to practise interview questions with me<sup>5</sup> to help me prepare my answers<sup>6</sup>. Because the company is local, I will visit their premises in advance<sup>7</sup>, to be certain of their location, so that I will not be late for the interview<sup>8</sup>. This will also let me see how the reception area is organised<sup>9</sup>. I will check online/in person to familiarise myself with the company's dress code<sup>10</sup>. I will dress smartly<sup>10</sup>, groom myself carefully<sup>10</sup> to show that I am serious about the job<sup>10</sup>. I will take my certificates with me to the interview<sup>10</sup>.

**(ii)** 1 mark per point to max 5

I will shake hands firmly with the members of the panel, smile at them, and ensure that I make eye contact with them; I will sit up straight, sit still, not fidgeting, and answer questions in a clear, confident voice.

**(iii)** 1 mark per point to max 5

The receptionist has first contact with members of the public, whether on the telephone or in person; this is when first impressions of the company and its personnel are formed; the receptionist is the face and voice of the company and has to make positive first impression. If the receptionist is slow, doesn't smile, is distracted by other things, or seems not to be particularly interested, he or she will create a negative impression of him/herself and the company; visitors will feel they are not valued; if they feel they are unwelcome, they may not give that company their custom.

**Maximum marks for (a) 20 marks**

**(b)** Up to 2 marks for the quality of the explanation + up to 3 marks for description of process.

A spreadsheet consists of a number of cells (boxes) arranged in horizontal numbered rows and vertical columns identified by letters. You can input either numerical data or textual information. A spreadsheet enables you to perform fast and accurate calculation and manipulation of figures. An example of a spreadsheet is Excel.

First of all I will open Excel. I will click on the word 'File' in the top left hand corner of the screen, then choose NEW from the File drop down menu. I will click on the document icon, and that will open a new spreadsheet for me. (Note that acceptable alternatives may begin with clicking on the Start icon in the bottom left hand corner of the screen, selecting the Microsoft Office Excel option and clicking the icon.)



### 3. Recommendations

---

Tutors should familiarise students with questions and tasks that require a chronological/sequential approach so that candidates are better prepared to organise their thoughts and structure their answers.

### 4. Model Answer

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**(a) (i)** I will research the company, using their website if they have one. I will consult other related internet sources that may contain views about the company. This will help me prepare questions for the interview panel. I will ask someone to practise interview questions with me to help me prepare my answers. Because the company is local, I will visit their premises in advance, to be certain of their location, so that I will not be late for the interview. This will also let me see how the reception area is organised. I will check online or in person to familiarise myself with the company's dress code. I will dress smartly and groom myself carefully to show that I am serious about the job. I will take my relevant certificates with me to the interview.

(ii)

I will shake hands firmly with the members of the panel, smile at them, and ensure that I make eye contact with them. I will sit up straight, sit still, not fidgeting, and answer questions in a clear, confident voice.

(iii)

The receptionist has first contact with members of the public, whether on the telephone or in person; this is when first impressions of the company and its personnel are formed. The receptionist is the face and voice of the company and has to make positive first impression. If the receptionist is slow, doesn't smile, is distracted by other things, or seems not to be particularly interested, he or she will create a negative impression of him/herself and the company. Consequently, visitors will feel they are not valued; if they feel they are unwelcome, they may not give that company their custom.

**(b)** A spreadsheet consists of a number of cells or boxes arranged in horizontal numbered rows and vertical columns identified by letters. You can input either numerical data or textual information. A spreadsheet enables you to perform fast and accurate calculation and manipulation of figures. An example of a spreadsheet is Excel.

First of all I will open Excel. I will click on the word 'File' in the top left hand corner of the screen, then choose NEW from the File drop down menu. I will click on the document icon, and that will open a new spreadsheet for me.

#### Examiner's tips

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Always check that your responses are structured and organised as required – for example, before, during, after.  
Take one STEP at a time.

## Question 8

Explain the meaning of **any five** of the following terms:

- (i) sole trader
- (ii) embargo
- (iii) primary data
- (iv) interface
- (v) peripheral device
- (vi) tariff
- (vii) buyer's market
- (viii) arbiter (arbitrator)

### Learning Outcome

- 10.10.1
- 10.10.2
- 10.10.3
- 10.10.4

## 1. Comments on learners' performance

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Perhaps unsurprisingly, some terms proved more popular than others, and those candidates who selected the question could offer acceptable explanations of sole trader/embargo/primary data/peripheral device. Definitions of the other terms were less successful. It is particularly disappointing to see how few candidates understand what is meant by 'buyer's market'.

## 2. Mark scheme

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Judge each answer separately as:

- 5 Excellent; tells me all I need to know, with good style;
- 4 Very good; tells me most of what I need to know, reasonable style;
- 3 Good; explains some points with elaboration, but shows more limited breadth or depth;
- 2 Fair; struggling to say more than the basics; some confusion and poor style;
- 1 Poor; has almost no understanding of the term; guesswork and luck at best;
- 0 Bad; has no understanding at all; style hard to follow.

(i) A sole trader is a person who runs a business on his or her own, with no partners. A sole trader is responsible for all the risks and debts of the business, but keeps all the profits. If the business fails, a sole trader may lose personal assets, e.g. a house, in order to pay the debts of the business.

(ii) An embargo is a ban or prohibition, usually imposed on undesirable goods, e.g. drugs, ivory products. Australia bans the import of many foodstuffs, plants and seeds in order to protect its agriculture and environment. An embargo stops items from being legally imported or exported. Embargos can be applied against other countries, too; e.g. some countries have been prohibited from selling their oil to certain countries. Embargos can be imposed to put political pressure on a country to change some of its policies.

(iii) Primary data is information which is gathered at first hand, directly from people in the target market, rather than from books, newspapers or the internet. Primary research is also called 'field research', and consists usually of interviews or questionnaires that are designed to obtain opinions directly. Primary data can be expensive to collect, but it is much more reliable than secondary data, because it is collected for a specific purpose and is up to date.

(iv) An interface is any connection between two or more devices, e.g. a computer and a digital camera. An interface allows the devices to 'talk' to each other, and to exchange data. It allows one device to 'command' that another device perform a particular action such as printing. The word can also be used to describe a communication between (usually two) people.

(v) A peripheral device is a piece of hardware which is connected to a computer in order to transfer data. Peripheral devices can work independently of the computer. There are two types of peripheral device: input devices such as a camera or a scanner; output devices such as an external memory or a printer.

(vi) A tariff is a kind of tax or duty on goods that a country imports or exports; e.g. if you live in America and buy/import a car made in Europe, the price will include tariffs or extra charges that the Government adds to the price of imported vehicles. Usually a government imposes a tariff to encourage its own industries and to discourage buying cheaper imports from other countries. A government can also control exports by imposing tariffs. The word can also refer to a list of prices charged by a hotel or restaurant for meals, rooms, etc., or by a public company for gas, electricity, water, etc.

(vii) A buyer's market, also known as a 'soft market', occurs when supply is greater than demand; there are more sellers than buyers. Purchasers have an advantage over sellers in price negotiations and prices are generally low because of the competition between sellers is increased.

(viii) An arbiter/arbitrator is an independent person (or agency) whose judgment or opinion is considered to be sufficiently authoritative to give them the power to settle an argument or dispute; judges, referees and umpires are examples of arbiters; in the world of commerce, arbiters are often appointed to settle disputes such as strikes; both parties involved will agree on the appointment and also agree to abide by the result of the arbitration

### 3. Recommendations

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Tutors should remind students to obey the rubric of a given question. If it asks for FIVE explanations, only the first FIVE answers will be accepted. Candidates merely penalise themselves timewise by ignoring a clear instruction. Like any academic discipline, Business Communication has its own specific and precise terminology and it behoves candidates to familiarise themselves with the relevant vocabulary. Tutors should use the appropriate terms in context at every opportunity.

### 4. Model Answer

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(i) A sole trader is a person who runs a business on his or her own, with no partners. A sole trader is responsible for all the risks and debts of the business, but keeps all the profits. If the business fails, a sole trader may lose personal assets, e.g. a house, in order to pay the debts of the business.

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#### Examiner's tips

**KNOW your LIMIT!**  
**LEARN the LANGUAGE of the subject you are studying.**