



Personnel Administration

NQF

Subject Examiner's Report

Unit Title: Personnel Administration

Unit Code: PA

Session: June 2016

Question 1

People are an essential resource in the organisation, and it is the responsibility of the personnel function to manage this resource.

(a) Explain how the personnel function contributes to the overall success of an organisation. **(15 marks)**

(b) Explain how the personnel function can encourage organisational change. **(10 marks)**

Learning Outcome 1: Evaluate the factors which affect the effectiveness of the personnel function

1. Comments on learners' performance

This was the question of the eight that were set which was answered most accurately.

The first part of the question required the student to explain what the personnel function does in an organisation and how that relates to success. Students could identify a range of areas where the personnel function has an impact.

The second part was less well answered. It really needed students to think about what they had written in the first part, and then to identify the parts of the role that specifically link to change.

2. Mark scheme

Instructions to markers

(a) Three marks for each of the following points. If they are not well developed, but just noted then give one mark:

(b) Two marks for each of the following

Suggested answer

(a) Recruits people with the skills that are required for now, and for the future

Helps to identify and then meet learning and development needs in the organisation.

Ensures that the reward approach is effective, and is helping to retain key skills in the organisation.

Manages the performance management process, to ensure that any problems are being identified and addressed

Manages the disciplinary process to ensure that standards and rules are being adhered to, and hence there is order in the organisation.

(b) There is a need to take a more strategic role, and just focus on a more administrative and welfare based approach

There needs to be a more focused approach to recruitment and selection, using appropriate assessment techniques

There needs to be a focus on learning and development, to ensure that employees develop the skills that are required.

Leadership has to be effective to lead change – and the personnel function needs to recruit effective leaders.

There is a need to ensure that there is effective communication with all employees.

3. Recommendations

It seems that there is a need to learn more about the management of change

Examiner's tips

When you come across a question you know well answer it first. That will build your confidence.

Question 2

The Personnel Administrator must behave appropriately.

(a) Explain the way that ethical requirements impact on the role of the Personnel Administrator
(15 marks)

(b) Give three examples of the way that legal restrictions impact on the work that is carried out by the Personnel Administrator
(10 marks)

Learning Outcome 2: Assess the factors required to operate as an effective and efficient professional personnel administrator

1. Comments on learners' performance

This question was not very popular.

The focus here is on the way that the Personnel Administrator must behave. To answer the first part the student needed to think about the role, and to think about the way that it is carried out to ensure ethical standards are met.

Students struggled to identify three types of legal restrictions. There was a not a need to name the law, or to give details of the law, the focus was on showing an understanding of the areas of work that are restricted by the law.

2. Mark scheme

Instructions to markers

(a) Three marks for each of the following

(b) Three marks for each of the following (and then consider whether to give an additional bonus mark):

Suggested answer

(a)

- Need to ensure that everyone is treated equally, and not treated less favourably because of their race, age, religion etc.
- Need to keep personal information about employees confidential
- Need to ensure that nothing is posted on social media that could bring the company into disrepute
- Need to ensure that the company treats customers and suppliers appropriately, and does not try to deceive them
- Need to ensure that the processes in the organisation do not damage the environment

(b)

- Equality Act 2010 – means that employees cannot be treated less favourably in all aspects of people management due to a protected characteristic
- Employment Rights Act 1996 – says that there are only five potentially fair reasons for dismissal, and employees must only be dismissed for one of these reasons.
- Work and Families Act 2006 – sets out the rights for women who are pregnant not to be treated less favourably, and for nothing to be done which might harm their unborn child

NB: Students are likely to refer to legislation in their own country, and that is expected and rewarded. These are just examples of the type of approach that could be taken to this answer.

3. Recommendations

There is no requirement to know the law in detail, but students should understand the main impacts on employment law.

Examiner's tips

Ensure you understand the reasons that a Personnel Administrator must act in a particular way.

Question 3

Personnel Administrators need to ensure that they are competent in the role.

- (a)** Explain two methods of assessing your own competence, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each method. **(14 marks)**
(b) Select one of these methods and draft an assessment of your personal competence. **(11 marks)**

Learning Outcome 3: Evaluate their performance as an effective professional personnel administrator

1. Comments on learners' performance

This was not a very popular question, but those who did answer it did well. The first question looked at the measurement of self. Approaches such as a SWOT analysis or a skills audit were usually explained, and these are both valid approaches to use.

The assessment of one's own competence was less well answered. The focus needed to be on the process of making this assessment and what an assessment would look like.

2. Mark scheme

- (a)** Two marks for identifying each approach that could be used. Examples are

Skills audit
Personal SWOT analysis

Two marks for each advantage and disadvantage, up to a maximum of 10 marks:
Both approaches are very subjective

It is difficult to identify all the skills that are required

A personal assessment is very limited, because it does not include the views of people that the employee works with

A skills audit just focuses on skills, and does not consider whether they are needed in the organisation

A SWOT analysis can be difficult to complete, because it is not always possible to predict the threats and opportunities.

14 marks

- (b)** That leaves 11 marks for the actual assessment.

1 mark for presentation
2 marks for a relevant layout
2 marks for identifying relevant competencies
2 marks for having some element of assessment (eg ranking the level of skill)
2 marks for the range of competencies addressed
2 marks for the evidence of personal reflection.

3. Recommendations

Be sure that you have covered all the syllabus in your studies.

Examiner's tips

Ensure that you have studied all the syllabus in your studies.

Question 4

Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the following approaches to recruitment and selection:

- Interviews
- References
- Ability tests

Learning Outcome 4: Evaluate the role of human resource management

1. Comments on learners' performance

Here there was a need to assess the strengths and weaknesses of three selection approaches. Some students spent time explaining what the three approaches are, or explaining how the applicant might feel in using the different approaches. This was not answering the question. The focus should have been on identifying the way that the approaches are beneficial or not.

2. Mark scheme

Instructions to markers

Allocate 8 marks for each of the 3 approaches (and then consider whether there should be a bonus mark for a very good answer):

For each approach give two marks for each strength/weakness:

Suggested answer

- Interviews:

Strengths – opportunity to ask more probing questions

Strengths – chance to assess whether the person would 'fit in'

Weakness – some people just 'sell themselves' well

Weakness – not all interviewers are good at assessing individuals

- References:

Strengths – they are an assessment by someone they have worked for

Strengths – they confirm what the applicant has said in their application

Weakness – they might not be true, the referee might want to keep/get rid of the employee

Weakness – it might not include much detail

- Ability test:

Strengths – a real way to see if the applicant can do what s/he says s/he can do

Strengths – a more objective approach to assessment

Weakness – can be difficult to match the test closely to the job

Weakness – difficult to know what standard to set for the assessment

3. Recommendations

Answer the specific question that is set

Examiner's tips

You must answer the question. You will not get credit for answering a question that was not asked.

Question 5

Question 5

Employment relationships within an organisation can be affected by a large range of factors.

(a) Outline five external factors that can affect employee relations.

(15 marks)

(b) Outline three internal factors that can affect employee relations.

(10 marks)

Learning Outcome 5: Evaluate the role of performance management

1. Comments on learners' performance

This question specifically focused on the employment relationship and asked for five external factors and three internal factors. Students did not seem to understand the difference between the two, and many students gave eight internal factors.

It is important to note that the external factors are things that are outside the organisation. Using a PESTLE type analysis and thinking about political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental issues is a good way of identifying external factors. The internal factors are the things within the organisation, examples such as leadership style and organisation structure were valid ones to give.

2. Mark scheme

Instructions to markers

(a) The student could identify five of a large number of external factors – the important point is that they must be external, and not internal. Three marks for each factor:

(b) Three marks for each point (and then consider whether a bonus point is applicable):

Suggested answer

(a) Changes to the law that can change the balance of power in the relationship

A downturn in the economy that can mean that employees have to be paid less

Developments in technology, for example the increase in hand held devices means that it is more possible to work from home, which can mean that employees see less of their manager.

Change in government, which could change the law or priorities relating to employment policies

An increase in inflation that can make it more difficult to pay employees the salaries they aspire to receive

(b) The company loses a major order or contract and this reduces the amount of work that is available causing a lack of job security.

A new manager is appointed who has new approaches, and this unsettles employees.

There is an increase in the number of grievances in the organisation, leading to all employees questioning whether they are happy

3. Recommendations

Ensure you know the difference between an internal and external factor

Examiner's tips

Internal and external factors are different.
Ensure you know that difference.

Question 6

Describe the information that you would gather to prepare for each of the following interviews:

- Disciplinary interview
- Grievance interview
- Exit interview
- Pre-retirement interview

Learning Outcome 6: Demonstrate their ability to carry out the functions of a personnel administrator effectively and efficiently

1. Comments on learners' performance

The answers to this question were poor, because students did not read the question. It specifically asks the student to 'describe the information that you would gather to prepare for each of the following interviews'. However, most students wrote about the purpose of the different interviews and how they should be conducted. That did not answer the question, and so there were some students who wrote long and detailed answers but did not get any marks.

2. Mark scheme

Instructions to markers

Allow 6 marks for each type of interview, and then consider whether it is appropriate to award an additional bonus mark.

When allocating the 6 marks for each type of interview, give 2 marks for each point:

Suggested answer

(a) Disciplinary

Evidence relating to the allegation
Copies of any previous disciplinary warnings
Copy of the disciplinary procedure

(b) Grievance

Evidence relating to the grievance that has been raised
Information relating to any similar grievances in the past
Copy of the grievance procedure

(c) Exit

Copy of the employee's resignation letter
The employee's personnel file
A form to complete, to ensure that everything is covered

(d) Pre-retirement

The employee's personnel file
Any company information about pensions
Guidance documents on managing retirement

3. Recommendations

Again, you must answer the question that is set.

Examiner's tips

Answer the specific question that is set.

Question 7

It is very important to ensure that the shortlisting process is carried out fairly.

(a) Explain the criteria that you would use when shortlisting for a Personnel Administrator role. **(10 marks)**

(b) Explain how discrimination can occur in the shortlisting process, and indicate how it can be avoided. **(15 marks)**

Learning Outcome 6: Demonstrate their ability to carry out the functions of a personnel administrator effectively and efficiently

1. Comments on learners' performance

Again, this was a question where students struggled because they did not answer the question. The first part of the question asks for the criteria that would be used when shortlisting for a Personnel Administrator role. However, many students wrote about the process for shortlisting, or even the full recruitment process. Again, there were some detailed answers that did not get any marks.

2. Mark scheme

Instructions to markers

(a) Two marks for each point

(b) Two marks for each way discrimination can occur, and three marks for how it can be avoided.

Suggested answer

(a)

- Past experience in doing a similar role
- Relevant qualifications (eg a Personnel qualification)
- Experience working in a similar type of organisation
- Having any attributes identified as essential in the person specification
- Having any attributes identified as desirable in the person specification.

(b) Asking for a specific number of years' experience can lead to age discrimination (because younger people have less experience). Avoid it by only asking for experience which is essential.

Asking for fluency in English could lead to race discrimination. Only ask for fluency in a particular language if it is an essential part of the job.

Asking for the ability to work irregular hours could be sex discrimination, because women are more likely to have caring responsibilities. Avoid it by having some flexibility in the hours requested.

3. Recommendations

You will not get marks for answers that do not address the question that was asked.

Examiner's tips

You must answer the question that was set.

Question 8

You have been asked to design a training event for employees who are required to operate a new computing system that has been installed in your organisation.

- (a) Explain the factors that you would need to consider when designing this training event. **(15 marks)**
(b) Explain how you would evaluate the success of the training event. **(10 marks)**

Learning Outcome 6: Demonstrate their ability to carry out the functions of a personnel administrator effectively and efficiently

1. Comments on learners' performance

This was a popular question and it was generally answered well. Students were able to identify a good number of factors that needed to be considered when designing the training event, and it was really encouraging to see that they were linking the design back to the specific type of training event in the question. The way of evaluating the success of the training was also explained well.

2. Mark scheme

Instructions to markers

- (a) Three marks for each point
(b) Two marks for each point

Suggested answer

(a)

- Assess the current level of competence of all the attendees – have they tried using the system at all?
- Identify how the attendees are going to be using the system. Do they all need to have the same level of competence, or should they be trained in small groups to different levels?
- Identify who has the competence to carry out the training. Do we need to bring in an internal expert?
- Identify how long the training is going to last. Ensure that there are regular breaks.
- Decide whether it is best to train individuals in their workplace, where they have their computers in front of them, or in a classroom environment.

(b)

- Talk to the line managers and ask if the employees are using the system effectively
- Talk to the employees who attended the course and see if they are having any difficulties
- Analyse the errors that are being made, if any.
- Talk to the help desk to see if they are receiving a lot of requests for further help
- Ask the employees if they found the course helpful.

3. Recommendations

Be confident and give detail when you know a topic well.

Examiner's tips

Be confident – you can answer questions well!