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## Personnel Administration

NQF

### Subject Examiner's Report

**Unit Title:** Personnel Administration  
**Unit Code:** PA  
**QCF Level:** 4  
**Session:** December 2015

## Question 1

The role of the Personnel Administrator is to support the management of people in an organisation.

- (a) Explain the way that the role varies between a national and multi-national organisation.
- (b) Explain the way that the role varies in different organizational sectors

*Learning Outcome 1: Understand the support role and operational functions of the Personnel Administrator in the typical organisation.*

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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This question had two parts. The main weakness with the answers was repeating the same points for the two parts of the question.

Personnel administration in national and multi-national organisations is primarily affected by the culture of different countries. When we look at operating in different sectors it is the nature of the work in the different sectors which has the main impacts. These differences did need to be identified.

### 2. Mark scheme

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(a) The approach to reward is more complicated because there is a need to ensure parity, but also have regard to local currency and cost of living

The law is different in different countries, so there is a need to understand the different laws and to adapt company policies accordingly.

The level of unemployment might differ in different countries, and that could mean that the approach to recruitment and selection needs to vary

The Personnel Administrator might be working in Head Office, and if so will be developing policies that are applied across all countries in many circumstances.

If the Personnel Administrator is based in just one country they will have a more operational role, and have less freedom to develop policies and procedures.

(b) In retail there is a need for a lot of temporary workers, and turnover is often high – so need to focus a lot on recruitment.

In engineering there is often a fight for scarce skills, and hence need to ensure that reward policies are attractive.

In manufacturing there is a lot of focus on quality and quantity, and this emphasises the need for effective reward programmes.

In the education sector there is the need to have people who have leading edge knowledge, so there is a need to have sophisticated recruitment approaches.

In the public sector turnover is quite high, so need to be focusing on retention strategies

### 3. Recommendations

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Do not repeat the same content for two parts of a question.

#### Examiner's tips

It will be unusual for the same answers to be correct for two different parts of a question.

## Question 2

The Personnel Administrator job can be very varied.

- (a) Outline the key tasks of the Personnel Administrator
- (b) At the start of a busy day you have a lot of tasks to complete. Explain how you would prioritise the work that you have to do.
- (c) Set two personal objectives for a Personnel Administrator

*Learning Outcome 2: Understand the significance of the factors that affect the way in which the personnel/HR function operates, and which therefore influence the role and functions of the Personnel Administrator.*

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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This question was generally answered well. Students seemed to know the key tasks of the Personnel Administrator, as would be hoped. Most students made some good points about prioritisation of tasks, although there were quite a number of students that only answered the first part of the question and then went no further.

Setting out two personal objectives should have been straightforward, but here students did seem to struggle with understanding the nature of an objective.

### 2. Mark scheme

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- (a)
- Keeping accurate records
  - Advising line managers
  - Planning interviews
  - Carrying out interviews
  - Developing new policies
  - Managing the reward for employees
  - Advising employees
  - Supporting employees who are having a troubled time
  - Managing grievances
  - Managing disciplinaries
- (b)
- Look at the deadlines for the tasks
  - Identify any issues that might become a bigger problem if they are not dealt with promptly
  - Group tasks together so that they can be completed as one
  - Keep a diary
  - Ask the manager what the priority is
- (c) Any realistic personal objective is acceptable

### 3. Recommendations

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Answer all parts of the question

#### Examiner's tips

Ensure you answer all parts of the question

### Question 3

The Personnel Administrator has to work with a variety of shareholders. Identify five different stakeholders, and explain how you would adapt your behaviour when interacting with each one.

*Learning Outcome 3: Understand the competencies required by an effective and efficient Personnel Administrator.*

#### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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This was not a very popular question, but those who answered it did well. It is important to understand who stakeholders are, and to understand the wide range of groups that can be stakeholders.

Once the stakeholders had been identified most students were able to identify the different nature of their interests, and hence the way that a Personnel Administrator would interact with each stakeholder.

#### 2. Mark scheme

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Customers: Need to ensure that they are extremely pleased with the service otherwise they might go elsewhere. Need behaviours of listening, advising, empathy

Line Manager. Need to ensure that the needs of the line manager are being listened to, so that the work gets completed. Need behaviours of respect, listening and questioning

Suppliers. Need to ensure that suppliers understand what is required, and that they are committed to the success of the organisation. Need behaviours of clear communication, listening, being tough and not giving in to unreasonable demands on price

Peers: Need to be able to work effectively with others. Need behaviours of teamwork, co-operation, listening

Subordinates. Need to be able to give clear direction. Need behaviours of leadership, clear communication and listening.

#### 3. Recommendations

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Ensure that you know the definition of a stakeholder

#### Examiner's tips

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Be familiar with all key terms in the syllabus so that you understand all the questions.

## Question 4

You are the Personnel Administrator working in a manufacturing organisation. Your organisation has won a new contract, which is going to mean that 100 people need recruiting. What information would you gather in the HR planning process, and how would you use that information?

*Learning Outcome 4: Know how the Personnel Administrator can make a worthwhile contribution as a Personnel Administrator to the design of an organisation's HR plans and the day-to-day operation of its people resourcing practices.*

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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This question caused problems. The question specifically states that there is a need to recruit 100 new full time staff in a manufacturing business. The question also states that there is a requirement to explain the information that would be gathered in the planning process, and how this information would be used.

Many students just explained the recruitment process, focusing primarily on describing the interview process. However, this is not the planning process. The question was asking students to concentrate on the initial planning stages, rather than the actual recruitment itself. Few students identified relevant information that could be used, and hence the marks for this question were poor.

### 2. Mark scheme

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Current employee turnover rates: This will give an indication of whether there is a need to recruit more than 100 people, or at least to have a waiting list. If turnover is high it suggests that the 100 will not all be there for too long.

Current work rates: You have been told that 100 are needed, but is that figure correct? Need to work out the rate at which employees currently complete the work, and whether it is possible to achieve everything with 100 people.

Current absence rates. If the 100 people have been calculated on the basis that all 100 are present every day this will not be correct. Need to review this and allow for holidays and some sick leave.

Skill mix. Need to look at the skills that will be needed, and think about the likelihood of being able to recruit those skills.

Cost. It is important to have a good idea of the rate of pay that will be needed to attract the best employees, and therefore the cost of recruiting 100 employees.

### 3. Recommendations

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Answer the question that was asked. Read it carefully!

#### Examiner's tips

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Answer the specific question that is asked.

## Question 5

Performance appraisals are typically used to assess the performance of employees.

- (a) Identify the advantages and disadvantages of using a performance appraisal
- (b) Should the outcome of the appraisal be linked to the pay that the employee receives? Explain your reasons.

*Learning Outcome 5: Know how the Personnel Administrator can make a worthwhile contribution to the design, implementation, evaluation and improvement of an organisation's induction, training, learning and development processes.*

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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There were some interesting answers here, particularly to the second part of the answer. Most students explained an appraisal clearly and identified the advantages and disadvantages of using an appraisal.

There is no right or wrong answer as to whether appraisal should be linked to pay, and there were some thoughtful answers here explaining the difficulties on both sides of the argument.

### 2. Mark scheme

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(a) Advantages:

It means that employees get feedback on their performance, and hence can make improvements

It ensures that the employee and line manager sit down and talk to each other

It gives the organisation an overview of performance in the organisation, and the skills and abilities that there are.

Disadvantages:

There is the danger that the line manager gives a more favourable appraisal to an employee that is liked

A line manager might not carry out the appraisal interview very well, not giving the employee a chance to speak.

(b)

- Yes – because the better people should be paid more
- Yes – because the appraisal is a nonsense if it is not linked to pay, people are motivated by being rewarded for their performance
- No – because it means that employees might be less honest in admitting to problems or training needs in the appraisal
- No – because the appraisal process can be seen as subjective
- No – because it might not be possible to give the same pay award to all employees who score well in an appraisal process

### 3. Recommendations

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Do not be afraid to give a reasoned opinion when you are asked for it.

#### Examiner's tips

Always support your arguments with references to fact.

## Question 6

How can pay and reward systems be used to motivate employees? In answering the question refer to both financial and non-financial reward.

*Learning Outcome 5: Know how the Personnel Administrator can make a worthwhile contribution to the design, implementation, evaluation and improvement of an organisation's induction, training, learning and development processes.*

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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The link between pay/reward and motivation was generally explained well. Students seem to be more confident explaining the link between financial reward and motivation, rather than looking at non-financial rewards.

It is important to remember that non-financial reward is an important part of the motivation that employers can use, and also important to remember that non-financial reward could be the focus of a future question.

### 2. Mark scheme

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Can link money to performance. If employees are paid more for doing a good job they should be motivated to produce better performance.

Can link money to skills. If employees are paid more for having more skills they will be motivated to be multi-skilled which will make them more useful to the organisation.

Can link money to length of service. This can encourage loyalty, and make it less likely that an employee will leave.

Can use benefits to motivate employees. Allowing employees to choose some of their benefits can be very motivating, because it allows them to choose something that they really want and value.

Praise can be used to motivate employees, particularly if this is public praise (eg in a company newsletter or at a company team briefing). Employees will feel proud of what they have achieved.

### 3. Recommendations

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Ensure you know the difference between financial and non-financial reward.

#### Examiner's tips

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Be familiar with all key terms in the syllabus

## Question 7

It is important to ensure that employees understand what they are required to do in their job role.

- (a) Write a person specification for your job, ensuring that you clearly explain the requirements.
  
- (b) Write a job description for your job. Ensure that you cover everything that is required in a job description.

*Learning Outcome 6: Know how the Personnel Administrator can make a worthwhile contribution to the design, implementation, evaluation and improvement of an organisation's performance management systems.*

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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In this question the markers wanted to see that the student understood the difference between a job description and a person specification, and could identify the information that needs to be included in each.

Those that attempted the question generally did well, but overall this was not a popular question.

### 2. Mark scheme

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(a)

- Must identify the characteristics that are desirable
- Must identify the characteristics that are essential
- Must be a person specification (ie looking at the personal attributes) and not a job description
- Must name the job and department
- Must be realistic – not have an excessive number of essential characteristics

(b)

- Must name the job and department
- Should say that the tasks listed are examples of tasks, and not exhaustive (so that employees cannot say that they will not do something because it is not on their job description)
- Should identify any particular skills that are required
- The list of tasks should be realistic – not too excessive
- Should say when it will next be reviewed

### 3. Recommendations

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Ensure you understand the structure of key personnel documents

#### Examiner's tips

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Be prepared to apply practical skills to questions in the exam.



## Question 8

You have been asked to help with the recruitment of a new Administrator.

- (a) Explain the preparations that you would make to ensure that the interview went smoothly.
- (b) Once the Administrator has been recruited you are required to identify any training needs. Explain the different processes you could use to do this.

*Learning Outcome 6: Know how the Personnel Administrator can make a worthwhile contribution to the design, implementation, evaluation and improvement of an organisation's performance management systems.*

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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The first part of this question was answered very well. Students understood the preparations that need to be made for an interview, and identified a good range of action points to be considered.

The second part was not answered well. The question asks students to identify the approach for identifying training needs. Most students ignored this and simply explained how the training of a new employee would be carried out. This was not the focus of the question, it was identifying training needs that needed to be addressed.

### 2. Mark scheme

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- (a)
- Write to the applicant explaining when and where the interview is going to take place
  - Book a quiet room for the interview
  - Ensure that there are no telephones in the interview room
  - Make sure that each interviewer has a copy of the application form
  - Ensure that there is water available for the candidate and interviewers
  - Ensure that the interviewer has a pen and paper to record their notes
  - Phone the candidate to confirm that s/he is coming
  - Inform reception that a candidate is coming for an interview
- (b)
- Talk to the employee in induction, and identify any areas that the employee is worried about
  - Carry out some assessment tests during the induction process
  - Have a review meeting with the employee and the line manager after three weeks in the job to identify any particular training needs
  - Ask the line manager to log any mistakes that the employee makes, and address these
  - Identify any systems that are unique to your organisation because the employee will not know how to use these

### 3. Recommendations

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Ensure you answer the specific question that was asked

#### Examiner's tips

Answer the question!