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## Personnel Administration

NQF

### Subject Examiner's Report

**Unit Title:** Personnel Administration  
**Unit Code:** PA  
**NQF Level:** 4  
**Session:** December 2016

## Comments on Learning Outcome and Assessment Criteria Performance

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<b>Learning Outcomes &amp; Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<i>1: Evaluate the factors which affect the effectiveness of the personnel function</i>	Generally answered well, but many students did not keep focused on the specific question that was set.
<i>2: Assess the factors required to operate as an effective and efficient professional Personnel Administrator</i>	Students seem to understand the tasks that a Personnel Administrator is required to carry out, but have less understand of the impact of those tasks.
<i>3: Evaluate their performance as an effective professional personnel administrator</i>	The topic was understood well, but there was not enough focus on the specific question that was asked. It is very important to answer the question, and not to just go into saying everything that is known about a topic.
<i>4: Evaluate the role of human resource management</i>	This was not answered well, because the specific question that was set was not answered. It is very important to take time to read the question and to ensure that is being answered.
<i>5: Evaluate the role of performance management</i>	Some very mixed responses here. Some students did not show an ability to apply the material, and were focusing more on saying everything they knew about the topic, rather than answering the specific question.
<i>6: Demonstrate their ability to carry out the functions of a personnel administrator effectively and efficiently</i>	This was a stronger answer, and did show a very good understanding of the role of the Personnel Administrator.

## Question 1

- (a) The Personnel function is seen as being an important part of the organisation by many. Explain how the Personnel Function can contribute to the success of the organisation. (15 marks)
- (b) Describe the services that the HR function provides to other functions in the organisation. (10 marks)

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

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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This was a popular question and was answered well on the whole. It is important to keep focused on the specific question to get good marks. The first part asked how the personnel function can contribute to the success of the organisation. Many students just listed what the personnel function does, rather than being specific about the contribution to success. The services that are provided were generally addressed well.

### 2. Mark scheme

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Two marks for each point in part a and part b.

### 3. Recommendations

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Read the question very carefully. Underline the key words. In this question the words 'contribute' and 'success' needed to be underlined. Then, as you answer the question keep looking at the words that you have underlined to ensure that you are addressing them.

### 4. Model Answer

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**(a) Example points:**

- Ensures that people with the right skills are in place
- Recruits people so that there are always enough personnel
- Identifies training needs
- Arranges for training needs to be met
- Keeps accurate records so that there is always an understanding of what human resource is available
- Ensures that people are not paid incorrectly
- Ensures that people are set appropriate targets and receive support to achieve them
- Helps to address issues of under-performance

**(b) Example points:**

- HR is a service function, so to all functions provides a service of advice and support
- Needs to ensure that the right people are in place – so provides a recruitment service to all functions
- Needs to ensure that the employees have effective skills – so provides a development service to all functions
- Needs to address problems that occur, so can be a mediator for problems between functions
- Needs to ensure that policies and procedures fit with the objectives of the organisation and the individual functions.

#### Examiner's tips

Underline key words in the question to focus your attention on what is required.

## Question 2

- (a) The Personnel Administrator role can be very varied. At the start of a busy day you have a lot of tasks to complete. Explain how, as a Personnel Administrator you would prioritise the work that you have to do. (10 marks)
- (b) The Personnel Administrator must behave appropriately. Explain the impact ethical requirements have on the role of the Personnel Administrator. (15 marks)

*Learning Outcome 2: Assess the factors required to operate as an effective and efficient professional Personnel Administrator*

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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The two parts of this question are quite different, and it seemed that students had not read the full question before starting to write.

Most students answered part (a) well, with some good ideas about what to do to prioritise work.

However (b) was generally answered badly. There were a number of lists of tasks that Personnel Administrators need to carry out, but little focus on the impact of ethical requirements.

### 2. Mark scheme

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

### 3. Recommendations

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Before deciding what questions to answer read through both parts of the question carefully. Do not attempt questions if you can only answer one part.

### 4. Model Answer

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#### (a) Possible points to make:

- *What is time critical?*
- *What tasks affects most people?*
- *What are the implications of delaying something? Will it mean that others cannot get on with their work?*
- *How senior is the person who is asking you to do something?*
- *Are there some things I can do quickly, that will have a lot of impact but will not take a lot of time?*

#### (b) Suggested answers:

- *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.*

#### Examiner's tips

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Check you can answer both parts of a question before starting to write.

### Question 3

- (a) You are a personnel administrator and you are having your own annual appraisal later today. In preparation for this you are required to identify the attributes that you need in order to interact effectively with employees and line managers. (15 marks)
- (b) It is important that we continue to learn because everyone can develop their skills, and improve their current performance. Explain why continuous professional development is important. (10 marks)

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

#### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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This question suffered from students not reading what was required. In part (a) the Personnel Administrator is having an appraisal. However, the process of having the appraisal is not the focus of the question. The question is asking about attributes that are required to interact effectively with employees and line managers. The answer needed to identify those attributes, not explain the process of preparing for an appraisal.

Part (b) was generally answered well. There was generally a good understanding of continuous professional development and why it is important.

#### 2. Mark scheme

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

#### 3. Recommendations

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Answer the question! Read it through, note what is required, and keep focused on the specific question that is asked.

#### 4. Model Answer

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##### (a) Suggested answers:

- *Discretion – so that people will trust the PA when confiding information*
- *Efficiency – so that issues are addressed quickly and effectively*
- *Customer orientation – because the employees and line managers are customers*
- *Empathy – to understand that some issues are difficult to address*
- *Decisiveness – not to be swayed by arguments if you know something is correct*

##### (b) Suggested answers:

- *To achieve promotion*
- *To ensure that our organisation is competitive*
- *To keep any professional accreditation*
- *To keep up to date with changes (e.g. the law)*
- *To stimulate an interest in the work we do*

#### Examiner's tips

Answer the question that is set!

## Question 4

You are a Personnel Administrator working in a manufacturing organisation. Your organisation has won a new contract, which will require the equivalent of 100 additional full time staff.

Describe the information you would gather in the HR planning process, and explain how you would use that information to ensure you recruit the correct number of staff.

*Learning Outcome 4: Evaluate the role of human resource management*

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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This question was not answered well. The question is specifically about the HR planning process, which is emphasised by the specific question – which is asking how you would use the information that you would gather to recruit the correct number of staff.

So, there is a need to think about the planning process that must take place before starting on the advertising, interviewing and selection of applicants. Many students worked through the full recruitment process, spending most of their time writing about interviewing and selection. However, the question is not answering about that part of the process and hence no marks were given for this.

### 2. Mark scheme

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Two marks for each piece of information, and three marks for explaining how the information will be used

### 3. Recommendations

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Do not include information that is not needed. If the question is asking about a particular part of a process keep focused on that part of the process.

### 4. Model Answer

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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.

#### Examiner's tips

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Do not waste time adding in information to your answers which is not relevant.

## Question 5

- (a) Sometimes there are tensions between the employer and employees, or between different groups of employees. Explain the factors that can result in poor employer-employee relationships. (15 marks)
- (b) Performance appraisals are typically used to assess the performance of employees. Explain whether the outcome of the appraisal should be linked to the pay that the employees receives. (10 marks)

*Learning Outcome 5: Evaluate the role of performance management*

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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The first part of this question was generally answered well. There were a lot of good ideas about the reasons that conflict can occur between the employer and employee.

The second part resulted in some rather mixed answers. Some students approached this in a very structured and logical way, putting forward the reasons that there should be a link between pay and the appraisal outcome and the reasons that there should not be a link. Others wrote generally about the appraisal process and did not answer the question at all.

### 2. Mark scheme

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Two marks for each point in part a and part b

### 3. Recommendations

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If there is a question that you are particularly confident about that start with it. This will give you confidence as you approach the remainder of the exam paper.

### 4. Model Answer

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#### (a) Suggested points:

- *The employer and employees having different objectives – for example the employer could have the objective to reduce costs, whereas employees want improved benefits.*
- *Misinformation – the employees have misunderstood what the employer has told them*
- *Difficult operating environment – for example, losing a key customer which means that work becomes difficult for everyone*
- *Troublemakers – sometimes there are one or more employees who stir up trouble*
- *A rogue leader – there can sometimes be a manager who has a particular approach which upsets a lot of people*
- *Lack of trust*
- *Past problems - which suggest that the employer might do something that the employees do not like*
- *Problems with pay – particularly if it is perceived that the approach to pay in the organisation is not fair*

#### (b) Suggestion points:

- *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*

#### Examiner's tips

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You do not have to answer the questions in the order they are presented on the exam paper. If there is a question that you are confident about start with that.

## Question 6

You have been asked to organise a learning and development event in which your line managers will be updated on recruitment and selection techniques.

(a) Describe the information you will use to decide what to include in the event. (12 marks)

(b) Describe how you would ensure that the event is successfully evaluated (13 marks)

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

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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This was not answered well, and again this was because students did not read the question carefully and do as required.

We are told that there is going to be a learning and development event focused on recruitment and selection techniques. The first part of the question asked about the planning – what information would you use to decide what to include. Many students wrote about the overall planning, choosing a venue, time, refreshments etc. Although that is important it does not answer the question. The question is asking about the information that allows you to decide what to include in the content of the learning.

Some students put forward some very good ideas in answering part (b), but others continued to write about the practical preparations for the learning and development day.

### 2. Mark scheme

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Three marks for each point in part a and part b.

### 3. Recommendations

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Read the question carefully and answer what it asks.

### 4. Model Answer

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#### (a) Suggested points:

- *Information about the things that the line managers are doing well (so that time is not spent on them unnecessarily)*
- *Information about any areas of misunderstanding which have occurred recently in the recruitment and selection process*
- *Individual development needs from appraisals*
- *Any new approaches to recruitment and selection that you have read about in the HR press*
- *Any complaints from those involved in the selection process*
- *Any information you have about reasons people have turned down offers of employment*

#### (b) Suggested points:

- *Ask line managers to complete an evaluation sheet at the end of the event*
- *Use the evaluation sheet to identify issues relating to the design and administration of the course*
- *Ask the line managers' bosses if any improvements have been noted*
- *Carry out a further assessment soon after the event to see if the learning has been put into operation*
- *Carry out a further assessment about three months later to see if the learning has been remembered*

#### Examiner's tips

Read the question.



## Question 7

Explain how effective communication in an organisation can increase the commitment and engagement of employees. In answering the question you should refer to different forms of communication.

**(25 marks)**

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

### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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Generally students answered this well. It was also good to see a number of students using some models of communication and some theoretical basis for their answers.

A good number of communication methods were identified, and some good points were made about their strengths and weaknesses.

### 2. Mark scheme

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**Two marks for:**

- *Showing an understanding of commitment, and how this is determined amongst employees*

**Three marks for:**

- *Knowing what engagement is, and showing a reasonable understanding of what constitutes engagement*

**One mark for identifying a communication method and two marks for identifying why it might increase commitment and engagement**

### 3. Recommendations

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If you know some relevant theory or models always include them – this will add strength to your answer.

### 4. Model Answer

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Commitment is a desire to see the organisation being successful, and to be part of that success. Employees who are committed go the 'extra mile' for the organisation, and stay with the organisation.

Engagement is having a deep commitment, being determined to do all that is possible to see the organisation being successful.

**Suggested points:**

- *Newsletters – tell employees what is going on in the organisation, but it does not give the opportunity for feedback*
- *Intranet – a quick way of getting information to all employees, but does not work for those who do not have a computer*
- *Team briefings – gives the opportunity to discuss issues and ask questions, but the team leader might distort the information and might not be able to answer the questions*
- *Suggestion schemes – gives the opportunity for employees to share their insights into what can be improved, and can result in money being earned. However, encourages individuals to work individually rather than as a team (unless it is a team based scheme)*
- *Meeting with senior management – means that employees hear information from those who are creating it and can ask questions, but very time consuming for senior management*
- *Videos/podcasts – a way to ensure that senior management are communicating a consistent message, but there are no opportunities to ask questions*
- *Emails – a quick way to get information across, but very impersonal.*

#### Examiner's tips

Add in theory or models if you know them.

## Question 8

- (a) When recruiting new staff it is important to ensure that the needs of the organisation are met effectively. Explain the purpose of a job description and a person specification and explain how they are used in the recruitment process. (15 marks)
- (b) It is very important to ensure that the shortlisting process is carried out fairly. Explain the criteria that you would use when shortlisting for a Personnel Administrator role. (10 marks)

### Learning Outcome 4: Evaluate the role of Human Resource Management

#### 1. Comments on learners' performance

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The first part of this question was generally answered well. Students typically knew the difference between a job description and person specification and addressed this well. There were some good explanations of how they are used in the recruitment process.

The second part of the question was not answered as well. Again, too many students did not answer the question and explained the process of shortlisting rather than the criteria that would be used when shortlisting for the role.

#### 2. Mark scheme

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Two marks for explaining the purpose of each of the job description and person specification, and then three marks for each point about how they are used

Two marks for each point in part b.

#### 3. Recommendations

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Again, it is so important to answer the question. Read it through at least twice to be certain that you have understood what is required.

#### 4. Model Answer

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**(a) Suggested answers:**

- *Job description is used to define what the job holder is required to do*
- *Person specification is used to define the key attributes of the job holder*
- *Used to identify key criteria for shortlisting process*
- *Used to help define appropriate assessments*
- *Used to help determine interview questions*

**(b) Suggested answers:**

- *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*

#### Examiner's tips

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Read the question at least twice before you start to answer it.