

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2010**

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The performance of candidates in this year's examinations improved slightly because of gains on Paper 02. There was noteworthy decline in performance on Papers 01A and 01B and poor performance on Paper 03B continued unchecked. The examiners wish to highlight the great importance of candidate preparation to much better candidate performance.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01A – Short Answers

Section A – Module 1

Module 1 consisted of Questions 1 and 2, which were concerned with the research process. The scenario given spoke of students of Baxter High doing research on the nutritional contents of the meals consumed by students for lunch at that institution. The majority of candidates attempted both questions.

Question 1

Question 1 was concerned with the collection of data for the research undertaken by the students. It was designed to test candidates' ability to evaluate the appropriateness of data collection methods.

Part (a) of the question required candidates to identify two methods of data collection other than a questionnaire suitable for the given scenario.

While stronger candidates enjoyed much success with this question by scoring the two marks allocated, many weaker candidates had difficulty identifying methods for the collection of data. They confused the methods of data collection such as questionnaire, observation, focus group, with the research design, for instance, survey, poll or case study.

Another area of weakness noted in candidates was their confusion of the method of collecting data with how the method itself could be administered. Weaker candidates tended to give responses such as 'by telephone or over the Internet' as methods. Also, they had problems with the terminology given and opted instead to describe/detail the process. For example, for observation, a candidate would write 'stand and watch'.

Teachers should be reminded that at this level, students must be cognizant of the specialized vocabulary of the subject.

Part (b) of the question required candidates to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the two methods chosen in Part (a).

Candidates were obviously aware of the strengths and weaknesses associated with the methods but there were clear differences between stronger candidates and weaker ones. Many weaker candidates failed to choose strengths/weaknesses that were applicable to the scenario given, opting instead to regurgitate from lists learnt in class. Teachers should remind students that the scenario given is critical to the answering of the question.

In Part (c), candidates were required to comment on why a questionnaire would not have been the most suitable method of collecting data for the research undertaken by the students. This part of the question, without a doubt, posed the most problems for candidates. As in the previous part, candidates were asked to apply knowledge from the syllabus to a specific incident and many of them failed to do so. Many wrote of the general weaknesses of a questionnaire as well as its general unsuitability on specific occasions. Here again, they failed to let the scenario presented guide their responses.

This question also raised concerns about candidates' understanding of the process of sampling in research. Many candidates seemed to think that the entire student body in the scenario was to be the sample and thus erred in answering the question.

Question 2

This question tested candidates' ability to evaluate the effect of source, context, medium (channel) on the reliability/validity of information.

Part (a) of the question required candidates to provide three types of data the researchers would want to collect from the students of Baxter High. Candidates generally responded well to this question. Many were able to state three pieces/types of data the students would seek from the respondents in their research. Where candidates failed to do well, there was the familiar failure to utilize the given scenario.

Weaker candidates did not see the linkage between the data one would collect and the methods one would use as asked in Question 1(a). This failure led to some candidates giving answers that were not relevant. Well-performing candidates who had mastered Question 1 continued to perform well on this question, scoring the maximum marks, three, allocated.

Part (b) required the candidates to state four sources other than students, from which data could be obtained for the research, was the best done in the module. Stronger candidates, who linked Question 2(a) to 2(b), did extremely well. They easily scored the four marks allocated, as they were able to list four sources from which data could be gleaned for the research being undertaken.

Candidates who failed to do well on this part either did not see the link between the two questions or failed to differentiate between data and information. This led to some candidates listing sources of information instead, including textbooks.

Overall, performance on this module was creditable but there is clearly room for improvement. Well-prepared candidates navigated this module with relative ease but teachers should emphasize to their students that paying attention to the scenario is crucial as this was what, in many cases, separated the stronger candidates from the weaker ones.

Section B – Module 2

This module consisted of Questions 3–6, which tested the candidates' ability to differentiate between the linguistic features of Creole and Standard English; characterize situations in terms of register; describe attitudes to Creole and social factors that give rise to them; select media in which Creole is used; determine purposes of language use; differentiate between dialectal varieties in terms of use; identify pieces of technology used in making a speech and their purpose and identify audiovisual aids that would be used if the speech was being made to five-year-olds. Generally, candidates demonstrated familiarity with the content targeted and performed reasonably well on the module. However, teachers need to pay more attention to the exploration of the following areas: *linguistic features*, *register* and *dialectal variety*.

Question 3

For this question, candidates were required to (a) list linguistic features of Creole illustrated in a calypso that were *not* features of Standard English and (b) match situations to registers. With respect to Part (a), the answers desired were those which either provided a grammatical description (subject + verb structures) or an example of such a description ('ah...young'). Many candidates provided general components of language (phonology, syntax, lexicon) instead and struggled to express themselves clearly. With respect to Part (b), the registers sought were 'frozen/formal', 'consultative' and 'casual' but many candidates did not provide any answers here, suggesting unfamiliarity with the concept of register.

Question 4

Question 4 required candidates to (a) identify two differing attitudes to Creole revealed in the calypso, (b) give two social factors which might have influenced each attitude named in (a), and (c) state two alternative media in which Creole is used. With respect to Part (a), attitudes such as *pride* and *disapproval* were expected, but many candidates had difficulty naming an attitude, some contenting themselves with quotes from the calypso as answers (for example, 'Ah hear dem say Creole is wrong'). With respect to Part (b), answers such as *rising levels of nationalism and self-acceptance* and *widespread use of Creole on radio and TV* were expected as social factors, but many candidates had difficulty identifying and expressing appropriate social factors, providing, for example, vague answers such as 'social class', 'education' and 'environment', or unlikely factors such as 'better educational levels' and 'higher social status'. Part (c) proved to be the easiest to answer; most candidates correctly identified alternative media.

Question 5

This question centred on a cartoon and required candidates to (a) identify purposes of language and (b) identify the 'dialectal variety' used in the cartoon and provide three situations in which the variety is used. Generally it was poorly done. For Part (a), examples of answers expected were *informing*, *explaining*, *causing humour*, *entertaining*, and *persuading*, but many candidates had difficulty identifying purposes, providing language functions instead (for example, 'reflective', 'expressive', 'phatic', 'poetic', and 'communicative'). More careful attention will need to be paid to this area by teachers. For Part (b), the answer expected for 'dialectal variety' was (*Standard*) *English*, but many candidates provided answers relating to the Creole continuum: 'basilect' and 'mesolectal' and, since the second part of Part (b) depended on the first, gave answers that denied them the three marks allotted to that part.

This is an area that needs more attention, specifically situations associated with particular dialectal varieties.

Question 6

This question tested candidates' knowledge and understanding of the use of media for enhancing and facilitating communication. It required them to (a) list three pieces of technology to aid in presenting a speech on the use of illegal drugs and to explain the purpose of one of the pieces of technology, and (b) identify two audiovisual aids to be used if the presentation was being made to five-year-olds and give a reason for using one of the aids. It was fairly well done by many candidates. However, some candidates experienced three interpretation difficulties: (i) they did not quite understand the phrase 'pieces of technology' in Part (b); (ii) they ignored 'audio' in the term 'audiovisual' in giving their answers for Part (b); and (iii) they ignored the fact that Part (b) required that the audiovisual aids be selected specifically with an audience of five-year-olds in mind.

To help candidates improve their performance on this module, teachers are advised to do the following:

- Devote more time to teaching the terminology of the subject.
- Give their students more hands-on practice in responding specifically to the demands of the syllabus.
- Practise writing their own questions, using the objectives of the syllabus as a guide.
- Be more stringent in marking in-course assignments and tests so that candidates can see where they are losing marks and hopefully focus on those areas.
- Read the Communication Studies reports and share them with their colleagues and students.

Section C – Module 3

Candidates' performance was generally weak; indeed, it was noticeably lower than last year's.

Question 7

This question required candidates to study a cartoon and then (a) list four elements implied in the communication process, (b) list three evident non-verbal communicative behaviours, and (c) identify one barrier that influenced the response of one of the characters. Many candidates surprisingly struggled with the identification of elements in the communication process (sender, message, receiver, feedback) — perhaps because they were required to infer them. Many others had difficulty interpreting non-verbal behaviours such as the frown/puzzlement on the teacher's face; her hands akimbo expressing disapproval; the boy's hiding of the bag of candy suggesting guilt/fear of detection.

Question 8

This question required candidates to read a scenario about an interview and then (a) suggest three occasions on which the interviewee's attire would have been inappropriate and (b) give three examples of a formal communicative context. With respect to Part (a), because the interviewee was dressed in jeans and sneakers, the examiners thought that answers like *party*, *visit to the mall*, and *date at the cinema* would have been readily chosen; but some candidates struggled to provide three occasions. In Part (b), candidates also struggled to provide three contexts as well; answers like the following were expected: *an awards ceremony*, *a valedictory address at a graduation ceremony*, *a conference of delegates*.

Question 9

This question required candidates to, on the basis of a scenario in which somebody was having trouble beginning an essay on global warming, (a) list four pre-writing tasks during the planning stage and (b) state two functions that essay writing facilitates and provide an example of each function. Again, many candidates unexpectedly struggled. For Part (a), the examiners expected answers like the following: *selecting a topic*, *narrowing the topic*, *identifying an audience*, *establishing a purpose*. With respect to Part (b), examiners expected functions such as *provide a written record* and *summarize information* with the respective examples *report/thesis* and *notes/briefing/school-based assessment*.

Question 10

The question required candidates to study a cartoon and then (a) list two factors that might have led to a breakdown in the communication process, (b) state two ways in which the communication process could have been improved, and (c) state one communication strategy for each of four scenarios. For Part (a),

two expected answers were *message is ineffectively encoded* and *meaning is ambiguous*. For Part (b), two expected answers were *providing information on the person who has died, then explaining that you are going to a wake*. For Part (c), two expected answers for the first scenario were *draw a map* and *google it*, and expected answers for the fourth scenario included *card, telephone message, text message, shaking hands, kissing, patting back, and giving a high five*.

Paper 01B – Aural Comprehension

Question 1

This question required candidates to state the main idea of the poem in no more than 20 words. The mean was 0.82 (out of three). Many of the candidates understood what was required but there were many as well who incorrectly interpreted the rubric and responded to a ‘purpose’ question instead. Accordingly, responses began, *The writer’s main idea is to...*

Additionally, even among those who seemed to have understood the question, there was a minority who failed to acknowledge that the emotional response of the persona to the departure of the loved one was a critical element.

Examples of the most unexpected responses are as follows:

- *The persona went to the airport and was frightened by the sounds of jets taking off and landing.*
- *The poem is about someone who had gone to the airport to catch a flight and was angry and disappointed to watch the plane leaving without him.*
- *The poem is about a taxi behaving violently on the road.*

In relation to the third example above, candidates had a problem relating to *taxi* as a verb or anything other than a hired car.

Question 2

This question required candidates to state four pieces of information from the text that led them to the main idea; it was the best done of the questions. Most candidates performed satisfactorily on this question. Too many candidates, though, seemed not to be clear on how to extract information from the text and instead offered vague or general responses such as, “the figurative devices used in the poem”; “the tone of the writer”; “the connotative vocabulary used”; and “the context of the situation”.

There were many instances as well in which the pieces of information stated bore no clear relation to the main idea highlighted in the preceding response.

Question 3

This question comprised two parts, with Part (a) requiring the candidates to identify two literary devices used in the poem and Part (b) requiring them to furnish one example of the devices identified. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this question. The most popular responses to Part (a) were *metaphor* and *personification*, followed by *oxymoron*, *paradox* or *imagery*. The vast majority of candidates were able to score at least one mark on this question.

Far too many candidates identified *onomatopoeia* as one of the devices used, citing as examples words that appeal to the sense of sound (for example, ‘roars’, ‘thunders’ and ‘screaming’).

Additionally, there was a tendency to abuse the ellipsis. Guilty candidates would extract a portion of the poem containing the device but would omit specific words that conveyed the figurative meaning.

There were also a few instances in which candidates correctly identified the device but were unable to retrieve relevant examples from the poem.

Question 4

This question required candidates to comment on the effectiveness of the devices they had identified in Question 3(b). Performance on this question was generally unacceptable. For the most part, candidates merely defined the device but failed to establish any connection to the writer's purpose. There were also a few instances in which the devices were explained outside of the given context.

Recommendations

- Given that this paper tests both *listening* and *comprehension*, more time and effort should be devoted to developing both of these skills, separately and together. Exposing students to experiences that will build vocabulary would also help them to relate more positively to this component of the syllabus.
- Teachers should give more practice in differentiating the writer's/speaker's *main point* from his/her *purpose*.
- Students should be taught how the different literary devices function in genres.
- The use of *imagery* as a device is particularly troublesome. Teachers should make students aware of the different types of imagery so they can be more specific in their response.

Paper 02 – Essays

This paper comprised three compulsory questions. Performance was generally satisfactory.

Section A – Module 1

Question 1

The question was based on the excerpt *TV News: How much of it is really news?* adapted from *Awake Magazine*, April 22, 2003, p. 12. It was divided into two parts, (a) and (b), with Part (a) requiring candidates to state the writer's main point in not more than 30 words and Part (b) requiring them to write an essay of no more than 500 words in which they were to identify the writer's purpose and comment on his/her use of three strategies/language techniques to achieve that purpose.

There were several excellent responses, reflecting good knowledge of content and mastery of organizational and expression skills. But most candidates' performance fell in the mid range of the mark assigned to the question.

Many candidates lost marks for stating the main point as a purpose. More candidates did better at stating the writer's purpose but many of them lost marks for not including the effect on the audience. With

respect to strategies and techniques, many candidates were able to identify two strategies (particularly the use of statistics and rhetorical questions) but often did so without examples and were usually unable to effectively comment on how these strategies aided achievement of the writer's purpose. Most candidates limited their answers to definitions of 'strategy' and explanations of usual effect. Some candidates did a general analysis of the content without mentioning the writer's purpose or strategies. Alarming, some identified basic elements of writing such as paragraphs, punctuation and brackets as the writer's strategies.

Some candidates reproduced a number of strategies that they had been taught instead of identifying those that were featured in the extract. There were cases in which candidates *summarized* the extract instead of discussing language strategies. There were also cases of obvious misinterpretation of the task—for example, candidates discussing the *type of discourse* at length as a strategy. In numerous scripts, organization and expression were unsatisfactory. Effective introductions and conclusions were rare; transition structures were often inaccurate and quite mechanical; paragraphs were incoherent; phrasing was rambling and verbose; and there was an abundance of spelling and grammatical errors. (In respect of grammatical errors, subject-verb disagreement and tense errors predominated.)

Section B – Module 2

Question 2

This question was divided into three parts, (a), (b) and (c), and required candidates to write an essay of not more than 500 words discussing the use of language in the extract *Mammie's Form at the Post Office* adapted from Archie Markham's *A dark against the sky: An anthology of poems and short stories from Montserrat*.

Part (a) tested candidates' ability to discuss the relationship between the use of language and the content of the narrative. Most candidates misunderstood the question and wrote a long discourse on kinds of language (for example, acrolect, mesolect). They used many of the terms they had met in the classroom but, in most cases, the terms were incorrect and irrelevant (for example, proxemics, interpersonal, intrapersonal, consultative). It was obvious from the responses that candidates had learnt some terms by rote and were simply reproducing them.

In Part (b) candidates were required to discuss how Mammie's discomfort could be highlighted in a video production depicting the scene. It was the best done of the different parts of the question. Most of the candidates showed a knowledge of what was required even though many of them expressed their ideas rather poorly.

For Part (c) candidates were required to discuss the characters' reaction to each other's communicative behaviours and words. Unfortunately, many candidates did a poor job of answering it. They addressed the characters' reaction to parts of the building (such as the bullet-proof glass), the characters' upbringing, and other areas which fell outside of the focus of the question. Many candidates scored less than half of the marks for this part.

With respect to organization, there was some improvement but some difficulties remain. Many candidates produced one extended paragraph while others produced essays that were characterized by a general structural incoherence and by either absent or ineffectively written introductions and conclusions.

With regard to expression, many candidates showed that it was a struggle to (i) agree subjects with verbs, (ii) select the right tense, (iii) control complex syntax, (iv) choose the right word, (v) spell words correctly and (vi) punctuate correctly.

It was clear again that composing an essay presented difficulty for numerous candidates. Teachers need to persevere in the circumstances and seek to hone both their essay-writing knowledge and their essay-teaching skills. Emphasis should be placed on the structure of expository essays and on fundamental topics like (i) effectively introducing expository essays, (ii) expressing controlling ideas, (iii) stating the theme and constituent topics, (iv) illustrating a point, (v) ways of making a paragraph cohesive, (vi) moving from paragraph to paragraph and (vii) effectively concluding expository essays.

Section C – Module 3

Question 3

This question invited candidates to read a scenario about staffing a Caribbean-wide tournament in their country with volunteer general stewards and providers of medical and first aid, and then, assuming the role of volunteer coordinator, write a proposal, providing details of (a) strategies for persuading each of the target groups, (b) the register or tone to be used with each of the groups, and (c) the media/channels to be used to reach each of the groups. It was the best done of the questions.

Candidates should be commended for improved performance on this question, particularly in the areas of content and organization. Most of them were able to find an adequate number of strategies and media/channels for the targeted groups and to identify the appropriate registers and tones for the given context. There were some concerns, however, since some candidates neglected to include strategies involving an appeal to the prospective volunteers' emotions (pathos), intellect (logos), or character (ethos). With respect to appeals to logos, responses could have included *benefits to their careers* and *provision of support for the promotion of good health through sport*. For appeals to pathos candidates could have included *appreciation for all they do and volunteering for more even though they are busy* and *patriotic duty as citizens*. In regard to appeals to ethos, they could have included *approach through well-respected doctors* and *loyalty as a community member representing their country in a locally organized international event*.

For register, candidates could have selected the informal, formal, and consultative registers or a combination of Standard English (acrolect) and Creole (mesolect and basilect) for the stewards but, for the medical and first aid volunteers, mainly a formal register with some allowance for a consultative forum at some points during the presentation.

The tone for the stewards could have been *appreciative*, *serious*, *animated*, *enthusiastic*, or *conversational* but, for the medical and first aid workers, simply *serious* and *appreciative*.

With regard to the media/channels, candidates should have selected *advertisements*, *radio*, *television*, *Internet*, *billboards*, or *newspaper*. In addition, there should have been social networking options like Facebook; Twitter; text messaging; instant messaging; creation of a website; the issuing of flyers to possible volunteers in schools, universities, hospitals, health centres; email contact; placing pamphlets in popular shops in malls, restaurants, and institutions; and the use of blogs. Candidates who offered even brief comments/discussions of each of the relevant points they made for any of the sections managed to earn higher marks than candidates who simply mentioned or listed them. Candidates should be reminded that the mark allocation is 10 for *content*, 7 for *organization*, and 8 for *expression*. Many of them captured the ten marks for content but only managed to earn half of the totals for organization and expression. It should be noted that the seven marks for organization are awarded for an excellent introduction, the effective use of paragraphs with internal cohesion, the appropriate use of transitional devices, and an effective conclusion, and that, for expression, the eight marks are awarded for excellent, error-free language.

Despite the improved candidate performance, many examiners were offended by the use of wholly inappropriate profane English in some essays and in some personal notes which candidates wrote after the essays. If candidates read the questions well, develop their points carefully, organize their essays effectively, and demonstrate language competence, there should be even better performance in the next year's examination.

Paper 03A – Internal Assessment

The Portfolio

This section of the paper required candidates to produce original pieces in two of the three broad literary genres and to include elements of the chosen genres in their pieces. For the most part, the portfolios submitted for moderation were creative and interesting and candidates demonstrated that they understood the stipulations of the syllabus. Hence, there was less emphasis on the creativity of the physical appearance and more on the creativity of content. However, there were problems which should be reported.

One serious problem was that there were many portfolios which did not contain the *two* different literary genres, as well as themes selected which did not lend themselves to writing imaginatively. Expository pieces were submitted as reflective pieces. Many submissions seemed not to have been proofread, resulting in avoidable grammatical and spelling errors. Some portfolios contained a CD or DVD but no hard copy of the material.

Another noteworthy problem was unsatisfactory discussion of the intended audience. For example, instead of selecting a specific audience, candidates selected a general audience but were unable to say why this was the target audience. The situation referred to in the syllabus is the context in which the information would be shared and not the setting of the story or dramatic piece.

A third important problem was non-delineation of themes. The theme 'Teenage Pregnancy', for instance, could have been confined to the effects on the family or the society or the education of the teenager. The theme suggests that the candidate was examining all aspects but this is not possible given the word limit of the Portfolio. Another aspect of the problem was that some topics were more sociological and expository than literary (for example, 'the water system in my community'). This made it difficult for candidates to produce creative responses to selected themes.

In creating the reflective pieces, candidates should be asked to develop a checklist which would remind them to avoid the problems reported above and to observe the following, *inter alia*:

- maintenance of the critical components of short story writing throughout the writing process
- adherence to the requirements of the analytical section
- avoidance of the use of profane English in any form and for whatever reason

The Analytical Essay

While many candidates were able to competently write about the features of the language used in their creative pieces, many others had difficulties with the analytical essay. They did not analyse for communicative behaviours, attitudes to language or dialectical variation. They simply recapitulated the story without any of the required analysis. They produced essays of definitions without any plausible explanation for the choice of linguistic features in their writing. In violation of good marking practice, many of these essays were given very high scores which had to be significantly adjusted in the

moderation exercise. In one interesting case, all five candidates appeared to have been given a flawed template to follow, with the result that the essays were similarly constructed, with only the topic of the pieces being analysed being clearly different.

In the choice of external pieces for analysis, there was often no direct relation to the theme chosen and some pieces were from non-West Indian authors. Other noteworthy problems were:

- Selection of the less suitable piece from the available pieces (for example, selection of an element-deficient email over a short story that had all the elements for analysis)
- Misuse of the relevant terminology (for example, *frozen register*, *mesolect*)
- Lack of a conclusion to the entire portfolio and not simply each section of it

The examiners take this opportunity to encourage teachers to give serious attention to the problems reported above. Furthermore, they would like to appeal to teachers to ensure that the marks, including the totals, on the COMM 3 and COMM 5 forms are entered accurately.

Paper 03B – Alternative to Internal Assessment

One hundred and thirty-eight candidates wrote the paper and, as in previous years, the general quality of the responses was weak. Candidates continue to be poorly prepared for the paper and scored more of their marks for expression and organization than for content. It strongly appears that providers of tuition to these candidates need to be encouraged to become knowledgeable about the syllabus and follow its suggestions for teaching and learning activities.

Section A – Module 1

Question 1

This question came in two parts, Part (a) requiring the candidates to summarize the points raised in the article in no more than 90 words and Part (b) requiring them to write a 150-word evaluation of the article in point form exploring the credibility of the information. Performance was less than satisfactory. Most of the candidates showed an inability to deal with the demands of both summarization and evaluation.

Section B – Module 2

Question 2

This question required candidates to write an essay of no more than 300 words analysing an extract in terms of dialectal variation, attitudes to language, and communicative behaviour; the extract was adapted from Marlene Nourbese Philip's novel *Harriet's Daughter*. Performance was again unsatisfactory. Many candidates demonstrated poor understanding of the concepts to be analysed and opted instead to summarize the passage.

Section C – Module 3

Question 3

This question was based on an extract from the University of the West Indies magazine *The Pelican*. It tested candidates' ability to write an essay of no more than 250 words discussing (i) the writer's concern, (ii) her intended audience, (iii) what she hoped to achieve and (iv) two suitable contexts, other than a magazine, in which the excerpt could be used effectively. Again, many candidates provided responses

which showed both cluelessness as to how to negotiate the demands of the question and weak analytical ability.

Conclusion

Recommendations have been provided in the different sections of this report to help teachers improve their practice and these should be associated with those given in the new syllabus. In particular, teachers are urged to expand their knowledge of the foci of the three modules by reading more intensively and extensively, and devoting time for reflection on the new knowledge gained from such reading.