



SERIES 1 EXAMINATION 2003

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

LEVEL 3

(Code No: 3041)

TUESDAY 11 MARCH

Instructions to Candidates

- (a) The time allowed for this examination is 3 hours.*
 - (b) Answer **all 4** questions.*
 - (c) All questions carry equal marks.*
 - (d) All answers must be clearly and correctly numbered but need not be in numerical order.*
 - (e) While formal accuracy is expected, adequate and appropriate communication is essential and candidates must judge the length of their answers in this light.*
 - (f) When you finish, check your work carefully.*
 - (g) The use of standard English dictionaries and cordless non-programmable calculators is permitted. Candidates whose first language is not English may use a bilingual dictionary.*
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QUESTION 1

Situation

You are employed by a small manufacturing company, Premier Products, in the city of Midville. One of your tasks is to liaise with customers over complaints and suggestions.

You have just received the following letter:

79 Central Avenue
Midville

8 March 2003

Dear Sir or Madam

As you can see from my address, I live in the street leading to your factory and I would like to complain about the way your staff park their cars in the street.

From about 7.30 in the morning until late at night we often cannot park outside our own houses because your staff seem to prefer to leave their cars in the street rather than use your car park at the back of the factory. Some cars even block our drives so we cannot get our own cars into the garage.

I think this could even be dangerous. Often there are so many cars parked in the street that if there was an emergency a fire engine or ambulance could not get to the houses.

Please do something about this situation, or we will have to take further action.

Yours sincerely

Adam Fischer

Adam Fischer (Mr)

You speak to the company's manager, Mr Herman Torres, who says to you:

"Oh dear! More complaints from our neighbours. I thought we had resolved this problem when we extended the car park inside the grounds last year.

"Please be careful what you say to Mr Fischer. We need to maintain a good relationship with the people in the surrounding streets and we don't want the local newspaper giving us more bad publicity after that story about air pollution it published last year.

"But please let Mr Fischer know that there are now plenty of spaces in our car park, but some staff just can't be persuaded to use it. I will remind everyone once again about this but there's little we can do. Really we aren't responsible for what our staff do before they start work and after they finish.

"And I wonder if some of the cars don't belong to our staff. I suspect that some of the employees and customers at the new supermarket in East Street are parking in Central Avenue. As you know, we close at 6.00pm, so why would our staff leave their cars until late at night? The supermarket stays open much later, so maybe we are getting the blame when we are innocent.

"Perhaps you could also gently remind Mr Fischer that we are the largest employer in the locality and some of our staff live in Central Avenue. Certainly the shops in the areas are very glad of the custom from our staff.

QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

"I have to say, I do sympathise with him. It must be annoying to be faced with this problem. But we are doing our best and car parking is a problem everywhere in Midville. Maybe the city council could do more to provide car parks."

Task

Write a letter in response to Mr Fischer. You can assume that the company's headed notepaper is used.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You are employed in the local office of a government department in your area. The office deals with sensitive and confidential information, so there is a high level of security on the site and each entrance is staffed by a security guard who checks on cars and pedestrians entering the site.

The location of the site and the entrances is shown in the plan on the next page.

The government department is now investigating the costs of maintaining the security of the site and has decided that it is not viable for 3 entrances to be maintained; one must be closed, and replaced by an extension of the perimeter fence.

The management of the local office has been asked to decide which entrance to close, and you have been given the task of writing a report with recommendations to the Office Manager, Ms Marianne Alquist. You make some enquiries and carry out some investigations about Entrances 1, 2 and 3 (see plan) and your notes appear below:

Staff – seem to use all 3 entrances. 1 and 2 used by cars and pedestrians – 3 mainly cars (3 used least)

Most staff travel from town – pedestrians use local bus (stops at corner of 4th Avenue and Central Boulevard).

2 is most congested – on main road – but cars using 1 and 3 then find it difficult to get into Central Boulevard from 4th and 5th Avenue.

Local school feels 3 is potential traffic hazard as it is opposite school entrance – local police prefer car drivers to use 1 or 3 as 2 is on main road.

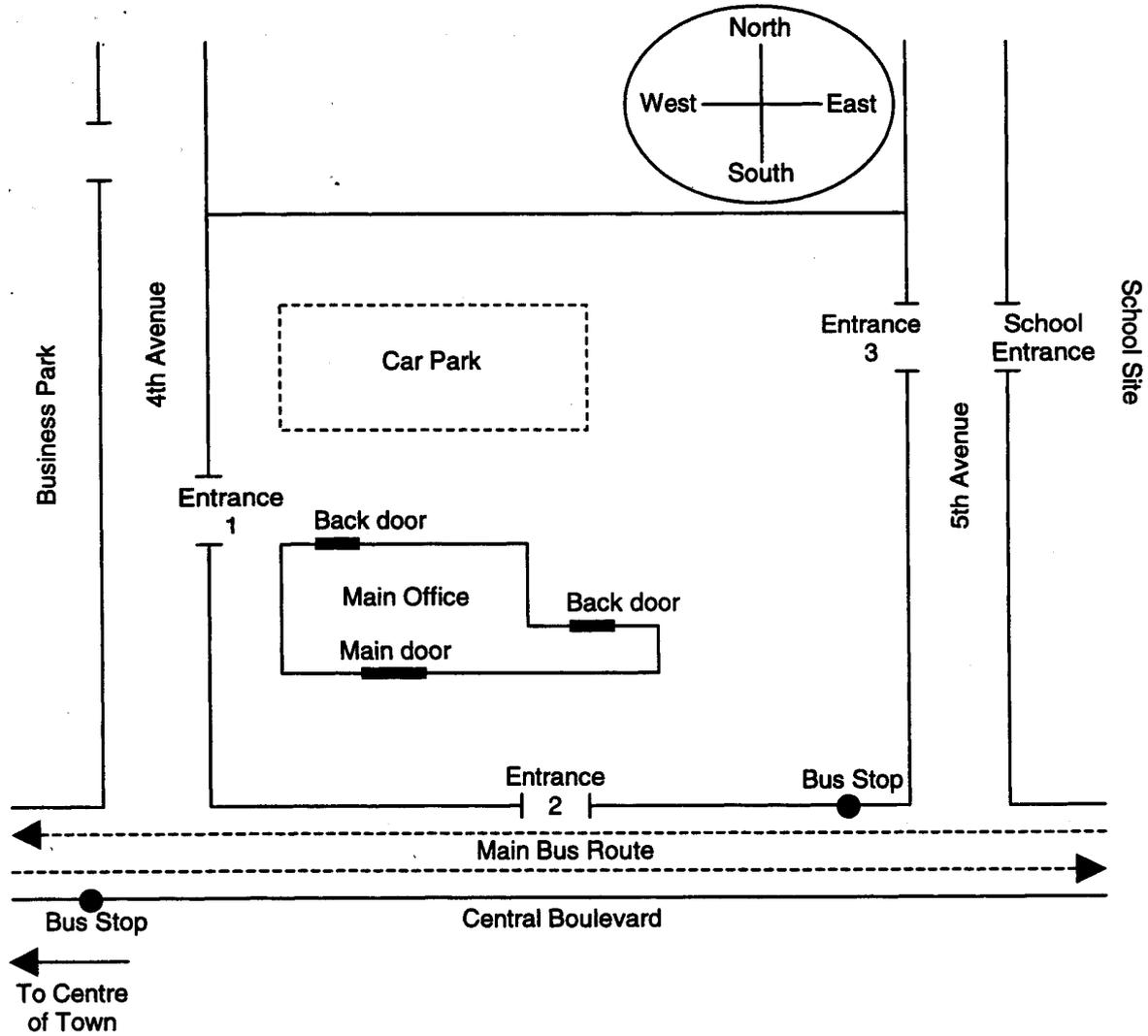
2 is closest to main door for pedestrians. 1 is closest to car park for car drivers.

Task

Using the information from the map and the notes, **write a report** making recommendations as to which entrance should be closed.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED



QUESTION 3

Situation

You work for a small company in your area that has recently made the decision to trade “on-line”, selling its products by means of the Internet. Specialists are currently setting up the various systems but you know from your previous experience that once a company makes a substantial use of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) it is vulnerable to computer virus infection. A virus is a program which, when introduced into a computer system, can cause damage to the systems and information held.

You have been asked to investigate what forms of viruses there are and what can be done when they attack systems. You will then meet your colleagues to report on your investigations and answer their questions. These questions follow the information you have gathered.

From: Business Information Service

You should be aware of the four main threats to on-line business. These are the main types of viruses:

- (1) The “simple” computer virus. This is a program which spreads to other programs in your system and deletes information or causes other damage to your data. These viruses have been in existence for many years.
- (2) The mail bomb. This is a new threat. It is an e-mail message which harms the computer itself when it is opened.
- (3) The computer worm. This is a development of the “simple” virus in which a program can re-activate itself or replicate and spread across a system.
- (4) The Trojan Horse: This is an e-mail message which seems innocent or even helpful, but when it is opened it starts to spread harmful viruses.

Advice from an insurance company specialising in computer viruses:

- There’s no substitute for simple vigilance and suspicion. If anything about any e-mails or on-line dealings just doesn’t seem right, seek assistance before you do anything.
- We will probably never fully overcome the problem. Each time we develop sophisticated systems of virus protection, even more sophisticated viruses are developed.
- A sensible basic precaution is to maintain back-ups or copies of files and information stored on computers. If a virus strikes, all is not then lost.
- As well as investing in reliable equipment and software, you should ensure you have added the most up-to-date virus protection software. This can detect when a virus has been introduced and prevent it from spreading.
- Take care with incoming e-mails or visits to your website. Do not open any files attached to e-mails unless you are certain they are genuine, as this is the main way in which viruses are introduced.
- Take particular care with “junk” or unsolicited contacts or e-mails. It is easy to ignore them and import viruses.
- When downloading from the Internet, take care and run a virus check on anything you download. You could be importing a virus without recognising it or even realising anything is amiss until much later.

If you are properly protected and you take these sensible measures you can reduce your risk substantially.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

TASK

Answer the following questions **in your own words as far as possible** to show your understanding of the information given.

- (a) What is a simple virus and how is a computer “worm” different? (5 marks)
- (b) How is a mail bomb different from the other main threats? (3 marks)
- (c) Why should back-up copies of files always be maintained? (3 marks)
- (d) What is the simplest and most basic precaution that all staff dealing with e-communications should take? (3 marks)
- (e) What is the purpose of virus protection software? (2 marks)
- (f) What is meant by “junk e-mails”, and why should care be taken with them? (3 marks)
- (g) What problems can arise if you visit the Internet? (3 marks)
- (h) Why is it unlikely that problems caused by viruses will ever be completely resolved? (3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You are employed in the Production Department of Superior Plastics, a company in your area which manufactures plastic household goods. You assist the Production Manager, Mr Chan Yan Tang, who has recently expressed his concern to you about the proportion of completed products that were failing quality control checks and therefore could not be sold to customers. The accepted tolerance level for rejected items is 2% but in the last six months of last year this figure was regularly exceeded. The figures for this year so far seem to indicate that this upward trend is continuing.

Mr Chan says this to you:

“We’re in a difficult position here. We know that quality slipped last year when we changed the production staff’s shift patterns and working practices, so we shouldn’t be too hard on the staff. But really we sorted this out by about August or September, and still the proportion of rejected goods is rising. And this year we have started badly. If this continues, the Directors and Senior Managers will get involved, and I’d rather keep things in our department for the time being.

“I think it would be a good idea if we gently reminded all the supervisors and charge hands in the department that product quality is important. They could perhaps keep a close check on staff, and maybe have a quiet word with those who have let standards slip. We need to be very careful what we say, of course. It is an important issue, but we’re some way from reaching a crisis – yet. I know you are very good at writing in this diplomatic way – that’s why I’d like you to draft the memo for me.

“I’ll give you the figures, but these are not for general release, so please just highlight the trends in your memo. We need to remind everyone how important quality is – every rejected item adds to our costs, of course.”

The figures he gives you are as follows:

Percentage of products failing final quality checks.

2002	January	1.9
	February	1.6
	March	1.9
	April	5.1
	May	4.3
	June	4.2
	July	4.4
	August	4.1
	September	2.4
	October	2.0
	November	2.8
	December	2.9
2003	January	3.1
	February	3.8

Task

Write the memo, in Mr Chan’s name, as requested.

(25 marks)



SERIES 2 EXAMINATION 2003

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

LEVEL 3

(Code No: 3041)

THURSDAY 10 APRIL

Instructions to Candidates

- (a) The time allowed for this examination is 3 hours.*
 - (b) Answer **all 4** questions.*
 - (c) All questions carry equal marks.*
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ASE 3041 2 03 1

QUESTION 1

You are employed by Fruity Foods UK, a manufacturer of speciality jams, preserves and other bottled and tinned fruit products, based in Kent in England. The company exports its products all over the world but ensures that they can only be purchased at selected outlets. The products could be said to be at the prestige end of the market; the company makes rigorous checks on potential suppliers to ensure that they conform to the highest standards and are always associated with high quality merchandise.

You work in the Sales and Marketing Department and the Sales Manager is Ms Miriam Mafuta. This morning Ms Mafuta hands you this letter.

WOZNIAK STORES
18 Wiolinowa Street
Warsaw 02-786
Poland

6 April 2003

Dear Sir or Madam

You will know that your products are very popular in Central Europe. In Poland we are fully aware of the high quality of your jams and preserves, which are currently available to be purchased by mail order. Wozniak Stores are often asked why we do not stock products and we would now like to do so.

I would be grateful if you could supply us with your catalogue and price list and your terms of trade.

I should add that ours is the most respected specialist food shop in Warsaw, if not in our country, and I am sure that a collaboration would be of great benefit to both our companies.

Yours faithfully

Dariusz Molska

Dariusz Molska (Mr)
Manager

Ms Mafuta says to you:

“This is interesting. As you know we rarely respond to unsolicited requests like this other than to thank enquirers for their interest. Oddly enough, we are currently investigating the possibility of expanding our sales in this part of the world, and our discreet enquiries have suggested that Wozniak Stores could be a possible outlet. We’d better not mention this specifically as people can be sensitive to enquiries being made about them, of course.

“Could you write to Mr Molska please? Don’t promise anything but say we’re interested. You’d better let him know that exporting to a new country is never easy – we’ll have to check all the various Polish regulations about food imports. It’s always much easier for us to trade with a European Union country but, who knows, Poland might join the EU some day – I know their government would like to.

“Anyway, what I’ll do is ask one of our contacts in the area to look into this. I’ll probably ask Lothar Kraus in Berlin and we’ll get back to Mr Molska later. Tell him not to worry if this takes a little time, and say how pleased we were to hear from him. I know you’re good at this.”

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QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

Task

Write the letter to Mr Dariusz Molska as requested. You can assume that your company's headed notepaper is used.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You work for KA International, a large manufacturing company. Recently the manager of the company, Mr Inderjit Singh, said to you:

"I've just spent a couple of hours going through the emails I have received and there seems to be a growing number of unsolicited messages – 'junk mail', I think it's called. Most of this stuff is useless, companies trying to sell us things we don't want or making announcements which don't interest us at all. I'm not the only one receiving these; I've spoken to various colleagues and they all say the same.

"Would you please look into this issue? I'd like to investigate how much of a problem this has become and produce a report for me on the subject. If you can, I'd like you to recommend what we can do to stop us receiving junk email."

You investigate the issue and the notes of your investigations are as follows:

From: Interview with the company's Legal Department

"This is a very complicated matter legally. Basically, sending junk emails is not against the law. There are some rules in our country about sending, for example, obscene or libellous emails, but not many emails come into this category. The problem is that emails can be sent from anywhere in the world and the law in each country varies. Perhaps we need some world-wide action here. But even if someone sending an email is acting illegally, it's an expensive and time-consuming process to go to the law for the solution. So legally, there's very little we can do about junk emails. Sorry!"

Results of investigations of incoming emails – week 10 (March 10 – 14)

Staff were asked to check incoming emails for a working week. Of the total number of staff who can receive emails, 92% responded.

The results were as follows:

24% of all incoming emails were unsolicited.

Of these, 98% were considered to be "junk" (ie of no value)

- 54% were from finance companies (banks, insurance companies etc)
- 29% were from other companies wishing to be suppliers
- 11% were announcements from government departments and other companies with no relevance to KA International
- 6% were from other sources

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QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

From: Email from service provider

As your Internet service provider, we can't prevent all junk mail from getting through, but if you let us know which senders or other servers you do not wish to receive from, we can block these.

I should also advise you not to respond to junk mail – just delete them straight away. Don't reply to the senders and ask them to remove your name from their list. This only confirms that the address is valid, resulting in even more emails.

From: Discussion with Head of Finance Department

"We know all about junk mail – we get more than anybody else in our company. But there are a couple of points I can add. Not all unsolicited mail is junk. Occasionally, a genuine offer can appear – we reduced our costs when we moved our accounts to a bank with lower charges last year as the result of an unsolicited email. So it might be better to ask someone to go through these quickly before they are deleted. But **please** don't print them out. The cost of paper and ink is just not worth it.

Task

Write the report for Mr Singh, as requested.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You are employed by a large company manufacturing electrical goods in your area. In recent years the company has been involved in a number of legal disputes resulting from customer complaints, failures by suppliers to deliver on time, and a rival company infringing copyright laws. Each of these disputes led to expensive and time-consuming court cases and unfortunately the company was not always successful.

Your company has just been notified that a new service is available in your area. This is called **mediation** and it is a simple way of solving disputes that does not involve the law or going to court. The two sides in the dispute meet with a trained neutral mediator in a confidential meeting and the job of the mediator is to help the two sides agree a solution to the dispute.

You have been asked to investigate the process of mediation further before your company considers its use. You decide that the easiest way to do this is to compare **mediation** with **litigation**, the system that uses the law. Your findings are as follows:

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

MEDIATION	LITIGATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although there is some cost, mediation is usually quite inexpensive. Meetings typically last for a day at the most and fees are shared between the parties. • Usually a compromise is reached which satisfies both sides of the dispute. • After mediation, both sides recognise that they have achieved a fair outcome and they can usually revert to having a good relationship. • Mediation is positive and forward-looking. The aim is to resolve the dispute now and to make sure it doesn't happen again in the future. • Mediation is flexible. There are few rules on how the settlement is reached. As long as they agree, the sides can use any method. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is expensive. Lawyers are expensive to employ and legal cases are often long and drawn out affairs which can last for weeks or months. • In a court, each side pushes its own case in as strong a way as possible. You rarely look for the aspects of your opponent's case that you accept, but both sides try to win. • After litigation the relationship between the sides is often destroyed forever as one side has to "win". • Litigation goes over what has happened in the past in great detail. The aim is not to protect the future interests of the parties. • Litigation has to follow the rules laid down by the legal system. These are often difficult for the non-specialist to understand, which is why expensive legal advice has to be given.
<p>The results of mediation can be binding on both sides if this is agreed in advance, but this is not usually necessary as both sides have agreed to the solution.</p> <p>Mediation does not always work. Sometimes the two sides just cannot agree. However, in this case nothing is lost, apart from the modest cost of mediation. If mediation fails, both sides can still then go to litigation, but over 80% of cases that go to mediation are solved without the law being involved.</p>	

Task

Answer the questions that follow, **in your own words as far as possible**, to show your understanding of the information you have gathered.

- (a) If a dispute goes to *litigation*, what does this mean? (2 marks)
- (b) What is the main purpose of mediation? (4 marks)
- (c) What is meant when it is said that a mediator is *neutral*? (2 marks)
- (d) Why is mediation much less expensive than litigation? (3 marks)
- (e) Why does mediation usually result in two sides enjoying a good relationship in future? (3 marks)
- (f) It could be said that one system is *adversarial* and one is *consensual*. Which phrases apply to each system? (1 mark)
- (g) Why is litigation inflexible when compared to mediation? (4 marks)
- (h) Why are the results of mediation usually accepted voluntarily by each side. (3 marks)
- (i) Why is it suggested that little is lost if mediation fails? (3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You are employed as the manager of the Enquiry Office of a motor car service and repair company, Rapid Repairs. The owner of the company, Mr Gregory de Silva, has just announced that in future all members of staff will be required to wear an identity badge giving their full name. He says this is part of an overall plan to improve customer service. Customers will be able to say who dealt with them should there be any problems or confusion in future.

When you announce this to your staff, there is a strong reaction to it. You feel that your staff have a difficult job dealing with customers and although you have no strong views personally on the identity badge issue, you do know your staff will not work as well if they are unhappy.

You speak to the staff individually and their reactions are as follows:

“I don’t think this is a good idea at all. My sister worked as a receptionist in the tax office and they don’t wear badges with their full names any more; there have been cases of angry clients finding out their home addresses from the names and intimidating them at home. I know this is unlikely in our company but staff deserve some protection.” (Mr T)

“I don’t see how there could be confusion. There are only 5 of us who work in reception – 3 women and 2 men. We all look different, so if we have to be identified, customers can easily say, for example, ‘I spoke to the tall, young man’ or ‘it was the short woman with long hair’.” (Miss G).

“There’s no way I’m going to wear a badge. I bet Mr de Silva will not wear one! I’m going to ‘lose’ mine or wear it under my coat where it can’t be seen.” (Mr L)

“It doesn’t bother me, really. At the last company I worked for we all wore our identity badges and nobody took much notice of them. However, I know my colleagues aren’t happy. Perhaps we could just wear badges with our first names. Customers could then identify us, but they wouldn’t know our full details.” (Ms P)

“This seems like a waste of time – and money. I know it probably won’t cost a lot to supply us all with badges, but the money could be better spent. The carpet in the reception area is worn out and we’ve reported this many times. Why can’t they spend the money on this?” (Mrs K)

Task

Write the memo to Mr de Silva expressing the concerns of yourself and your staff.

(25 marks)



SERIES 3 EXAMINATION 2003

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

LEVEL 3

(Code No: 3041)

WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE

Instructions to Candidates

- (a) *The time allowed for this examination is 3 hours.*
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QUESTION 1

Situation

You work in the Customer Service Department of a small company, Cookhouse Products, which makes kitchen equipment. The company has recently set up a site on the internet which gives details of its products and how they can be used. Other interesting features such as kitchen design ideas and recipes have been added and the site has been widely praised for being interesting and informative.

You recently received this letter.

518 Central Avenue
Smallville SM7 9DA

7 June 2003

Dear Sir or Madam

I am not an expert on computers or the Internet but my family persuaded me to “go online” so I could visit websites such as yours. Your website is fine but why do you charge so much for people to visit it?

Since my wife and I started to visit your site, our telephone bills have increased enormously. My latest bill was 75% higher than the previous one before we went on-line. My children do go on-line sometimes but they say they do not do this very often.

I would love to go on visiting your site, but I’m afraid I just cannot afford to do so.

Yours faithfully

Hugo Suarez

Hugo Suarez (Mr)

As far as you are aware, there is no charge to visit the website but you check with the Head of Marketing, Miriam Makoni, who laughs loudly when she sees the letter. She says this to you:

“Oh dear! Poor Mr Suarez just doesn’t seem to understand how the system works. Of course we don’t charge anyone for visiting our website. How much anyone pays for visiting any site depends on how much the telephone company, or your provider charges. This man might be well advised to check how much they charge him per minute for connecting to the Internet.

“But doesn’t this sound a bit suspicious to you? His children go on-line “but don’t do it very often”, or so they say! I bet the children are on-line all the time – my kids certainly are – and this is why his bill has increased”.

You decide to write to Mr Suarez to explain how the system works. You should not make any direct accusations about this family but you should offer suggestions as to why the bill is so high.

Task

Write an appropriate letter to Mr Suarez. You can assume that the company’s headed paper is used.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You work for a very successful company producing newspapers and magazines. The owner of the company, Mr Oliver Hochbaum, has a very high profile nationally and internationally. He started his career publishing a school magazine 20 years ago and he has seen his business grow into a massive publishing business.

Mr Hochbaum is often invited to participate in public events and you often assist him in this. Yesterday he gave you some documents and said this to you.

“Could you please help me? I’m off to America for a few days and I promised to do a job for the local college, Northern Business School, before I go. The students have to come up with an innovative business idea and I agreed to look at them and decide which was the best. I’ve got some notes about each idea but could you please summarise the information about the ideas into a report? The college has narrowed it down to five ideas and there are two prizes – one for the idea which is most environmentally friendly and one for the idea which makes best use of information and communication technology.

“I would be very grateful if you would put all the ideas into a sensible report to which I can refer and please suggest which of the ideas should receive the prizes. I know I should do this but I really haven’t time and your judgement is as good as mine”.

The notes on the five ideas are as follows:

The Quickbolt

This is a lock for inner doors in a house – can be fitted to inside doors in minutes – doesn’t damage the door – no holes drilled – fits most standard doors – makes them secure – any burglar who breaks in through outside door or window – can’t get any further into property – would give up.
Not very expensive to produce – great benefit to home owners.

The mini wind-turbine

Not cheap to produce – but can pay for itself in a few years. Turbine to produce electricity for places like schools, farms, small businesses etc from wind. No fossil fuels involved – no carbon dioxide emissions. Can store electricity generated when wind is blowing, for times when it is not – any surplus power fed into national grid. Quite small in appearance – can be placed on roof.

The interactive website

Great help for small businesses – provides on-line communication between a company and its suppliers – fully active website – secure information on orders, purchases, deliveries and payments exchanged between companies.
Saves time in small companies – can be used 24 hours a day – not expensive software – but some training for use required.

The heated cushion

This is a cushion which can be used at outdoor events (eg by spectators at sporting events) – disposable cushion – like a normal cushion – two layers of soft material – but also an inner layer of chemicals which, when mixed, gently heat up for about 2 hours. Comfortable and warm seat on cold days.
Perfectly safe – well tested – can be thrown away after use.

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

Multi-layered fun soap

Often difficult to persuade children to wash – can now encourage them with “fun” soap – looks like ordinary bar of soap but comprises several layers – changes colour as each layer is used – contains no harmful chemicals – but is often used very quickly – therefore more sold – good business idea.

Task

Write a report giving a logical presentation of the five ideas. You should recommend which idea should receive each prize and support your recommendations.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You are employed in the Human Resources Department of a large company, Flo-tech International, which is located in a very competitive high technology market. There has been much publicity recently about employees, particularly managers in such companies, suffering from stress due to the pressures of work.

The Human Resources Manager, Ms Ursula Decker, has asked you to investigate the causes, symptoms and results of stress and possible means of overcoming the problem. Having researched the topic, you will then be asked to meet the senior managers to discuss the issue.

The results of your research are as follows:

From an interview with an industrial psychologist.

“Stress” is the result of working under great pressure and attempting to do too much. It’s often connected with trying to meet targets or achieve deadlines, especially when the survival or profitability of the company depends on this. It is ironic that people who are stressed often attempt to work harder in response to it and make things worse rather than easing off to make things better.

From an interview with a company doctor

It’s well known that medical problems can result from stress. In the short term, stressed staff can suffer from irritability, insomnia and difficulty in concentrating. Stressed staff often take short spells of time off work – this can be a sign of stress levels rising and people feeling stressed can often turn to such harmful things as smoking, drinking or even eating too much as a comfort. If you suffer from stress for a longer period of time, this can have more serious consequences such as migraine attacks, ulcers, eczema or even heart disease.

From an interview with a government business advisor

There is a big difference between managers who are given incentives to work hard in order to stimulate staff and increase productivity, compared with those who are stressed by being placed under pressure. Stressed staff tend to lose concentration easier, and work less effectively. They often take out their frustrations on colleagues which leads to arguments and disharmony between colleagues. Stress leads to a marked decrease in the quality of work. This often results in a degeneration in the organisation of the work place. Staff under pressure seem unable to clear things up as they work so the work place starts to look untidy, even chaotic.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

From an interview with a representative of “Stress-Busters”, an organisation that advises companies on how to reduce stress levels.

There’s no secret or magical way to reduce stress levels, but there are many things senior management can do to help. Here are a few suggestions.

Encourage staff to work smarter not harder, find ways to help staff to be more organised and more productive to achieve more in the same time.

Keep an eye on everyone. Look out for the early tell-tale signs of stress and offer assistance.

Review regularly the staff’s workload and responsibilities to ensure that pressures are shared, not concentrated in one person or area.

Don’t ignore the social side of work. Take the staff out of the work environment from time to time; in other words, release the pressure valve.

Task

Answer the following questions, **in your own words as far as possible**, to show your understanding of the information given.

- (a) What causes some workers to suffer from stress? (2 marks)
- (b) Why does the industrial psychologist say it is “ironic” that workers who are stressed often attempt to work harder? (3 marks)
- (c) Apart from working harder, how do people who suffer from stress often make their own physical condition worse? (3 marks)
- (d) How do medical conditions, resulting from short-term stress, differ from those which are the result of long-term stress? (4 marks)
- (e) At what stage does working to incentives, which is positive, become working under stress, which is harmful? (3 marks)
- (f) Why is it likely that teamwork will not be as successful if staff are stressed? (4 marks)
- (g) Why does working smarter not harder reduce stress levels? (3 marks)
- (h) Apart from encouraging staff to work smarter, what else could a company do to prevent staff from becoming stressed? (3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You work for PDQ International, a major manufacturing company based in a large factory in the city of Rathlin. The company is currently modernising its premises and at the moment one of the oldest parts of the factory, Block J, is being re-built. The closure of Block J is causing some interruption to production but the rebuilding should be completed and re-opened in about three weeks.

Your work involves assisting the Managing Director of PDQ International, Mr Gregory Martin.

This morning, Mr Martin gave you these instructions.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

QUESTION 4 CONTINUED

"I've just had some bad news about Block J. The builders have found that the roof contains a huge amount of asbestos. Apparently it's the old type of asbestos which is a dangerous substance so work has had to come to an end until a specialist firm can come to remove the stuff. This could take months.

"Please call a meeting for all our Heads of Department. They need to clear their diaries for a full day meeting on Tuesday of next week. Mrs Doyle (the Facilities Manager) will let you know the details, you know, time and place.

"The next important thing is that this news is for Heads of Department only. We face all kinds of problems now, but that's what the meeting is about. We'd better not call them 'problems' – make sure you use a different term, 'issues', perhaps. But at the moment, the fewer people that know about this, the better.

"I'll need to know from everyone how the continued closure of Block J will affect them. We'll also have to discuss how we can organise health checks for all those who have worked in Block J. Any ideas on how we do this will be gratefully received!

"Please try not to alarm the Heads of Department. I'm sure that are ways we can get round the problems – sorry, issues! But it is important that the news does not get out just yet. I'll issue a statement after the meeting."

You have received this note from Mrs Doyle.

"I've been asked to arrange this meeting for Tuesday next week. I don't know what it's all about but it must be important if all Heads of Department are invited. I've organised Room 53 in Block F from 0930. I was told to arrange buffet meals for the day so you won't be interrupted – this gets more mysterious. I can't remember if any Heads are vegetarian or have any special food requirements but perhaps they can let me know about this."

Task

Draft the memo as instructed, to be sent to each Head of Department.

(25 marks)



SERIES 4 EXAMINATION 2003

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

LEVEL 3

(Code No: 3041)

FRIDAY 21 NOVEMBER

Instructions to Candidates

- (a) The time allowed for this examination is 3 hours.*
 - (b) Answer **all 4** questions.*
 - (c) All questions carry equal marks.*
 - (d) All answers must be clearly and correctly numbered but need not be in numerical order.*
 - (e) While formal accuracy is expected, adequate and appropriate communication is essential and candidates must judge the length of their answers in this light.*
 - (f) When you finish, check your work carefully.*
 - (g) The use of standard English dictionaries and cordless non-programmable calculators is permitted. Candidates whose first language is not English may use a bilingual dictionary.*
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QUESTION 1

Situation

You are employed in the management department of a large hospital, the Cedars Hospital. The hospital has undergone a major redevelopment in recent years and the latest addition to its facilities is a large new department providing for the after-care of elderly patients who have undergone serious operations. Although this department has been providing care to patients for several weeks there is now to be an official opening to be held next week. The Minister of Health from the national government is going to perform the opening ceremony which will also be attended by many important guests from the local community and further afield.

The official opening is being paid for by local voluntary supporters of the hospital so it will not cost the tax payer anything. A local business executive, Mr Silvio Gredic, has made a large donation to the hospital and is paying the expenses of the Minister of Health. Mr Gredic's mother was treated in the hospital and he is very grateful for the care she received. However, he does not want his donations to be made public.

This morning the following article appears in the local newspaper, "The Gazette".

WHAT A WASTE OF MONEY

We all know what a fine job the Cedars Hospital does and we welcome all its new features. But "The Gazette" has learned that there is to be an expensive opening of the new department providing after-care for elderly patients. The Minister of Health is travelling over 500 kilometres to be here and many other so-called "important" guests will be there, eating and drinking at our expense.

It is obvious that this money could be much better spent as there are still lots of improvements that could be made to the hospital – the x-ray department is hardly state-of-the-art! It's not too late – call off the opening!

You feel that this is very inaccurate and unfair so you decide to write to the editor of "The Gazette". You know that the editor is happy to publish letters in response to any article. You decide to refute these allegations and take the opportunity to promote the hospital. The editor's name is Ms Maria Valentine and the newspaper's address is 19 Western Avenue, Boden City BD5 9JT.

Task

Write the letter to the editor of "The Gazette". You can assume that the hospital's headed notepaper will be used.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You work as an assistant to the manager of a restaurant, *The Golden Plate*. The restaurant is well-known in your area as a value-for-money establishments providing fairly basic meals at a modest cost.

The restaurant's trade has declined in recent years as it has faced competition from other, cheaper restaurants and branches of fast food establishments.

The owner of the restaurant, Mr Didier Fontaine, is giving thought to changing the focus of the establishment. He believes business would be better if *The Golden Plate* became a better-quality restaurant providing a greater range of high quality food for the more affluent end of the market.

Mr Fontaine has asked you to carry out some research as to whether this is worth further investigation.

You have carried out some research in your town and will **produce a report** with recommendations for Mr Fontaine. He has asked you not to produce statistics only, but to try and offer an explanation of your points.

The results of your research are as follows:

Interviews with existing customers

Over a period of 2 weeks I spoke to all customers about repositioning the restaurant in the market. The responses were as follows:

63% said they would continue to use the restaurant if it went "up-market"
31% said they would not
6% were not sure.

Typical comments were:

"I think cooking tastes have moved on since *The Golden Plate* opened. It could do with improving the variety and quality of the food."

"Yes – go up-market please. There's plenty of cheap restaurants around here but we are short of good quality restaurants."

"I might come more if it went up-market. It's not really the place for special occasions now, is it?"

"Oh no! *The Golden Plate* is cheap and cheerful. I don't want to pay more for better food. I can eat elsewhere if I want this."

From an interview with a business advisor of the local council

"The profile of restaurants in the area is quite interesting. There has been a massive growth in restaurants at the cheaper end of the market, particularly "fast-food" restaurants, but no such growth in the better quality market. There are some better quality restaurants out of town but only 2 with a central location like *The Golden Plate*. *Restaurant 42* is probably the best restaurant in the area but it is very expensive and exclusive and *Digby's* is fairly small. Both restaurants are always very well booked."

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

From street interviews with people in the town

Questions were asked of a random section of the population of the town. The response of those who said they ate in restaurants was as follows:

93% had heard of *The Golden Plate*. Of these, 89% associated it with a down-market image. Of those who used more expensive restaurants, 93% said it would be a good idea for another top quality restaurant to open and 85% said they would be likely to visit *The Golden Plate*.

Typical comments were:

"We're badly served for good restaurants in town. We have to travel some distance to find most of them."

"It's hard to think of *The Golden Plate* as a top quality restaurant."

"Most people would take a lot of convincing that it has improved before they visited it!"

From an interview with the Head Chef

"Actually, many of our staff are very well trained and would love to serve a wider range of better quality foods. We would have to take on some new staff (or retrain existing staff) because some areas are not covered. For example, we generally use frozen or tinned vegetables so we have little experience of cooking better-quality fresh vegetables. But in general, the staff would welcome this."

Task

Write a report for Mr Fontaine as requested, making appropriate recommendations.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You work in the offices of a large organisation. The office manager, Mrs Martha McCartney, is concerned that there has been an increase in the days lost by staff who are reporting that they are suffering from various bodily aches and pains. The office workers now spend virtually all of their time sitting in front of computers and Mrs McCartney is concerned that the staff could be suffering from a condition known as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). She knows very little about this but has asked you to research the topic and report back to herself and senior colleagues with ideas and suggestions.

You decide to speak to Professor Ivan Barr, who is an expert in industrial injuries. This is the record of your discussion.

You: Good morning, Professor Barr. Thanks for agreeing to see me. Perhaps you can start by telling me exactly what is RSI.

Prof Barr: Oh dear! You've started with the most difficult question! You see, RSI is an umbrella term because it covers a wide range of work related injuries to various parts of the body, like muscles, joints, tendons and nerves.

You: Well, do we know what causes it?

Prof Barr: Again, it's difficult to be specific. But think of the typical office worker who often sits in the same position for hours on end doing the same activities with the same equipment such as a keyboard and a mouse, with eyes permanently focussed on a flickering screen. This is not a healthy environment; it places a strain on various parts of the body and can take a physical toll.

You: You mean, it's dangerous?

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Prof Barr: Not exactly. There are fewer accidents than there will be in, say, a factory with lots of machinery or in a coal mine but workers can still suffer. And one problem we face is that this type of office work is still relatively new. We don't know what the long term effects might be as no-one has yet worked in this way for 30, 40 or 50 years.

You: How can you tell if you are suffering from RSI?

Prof Barr: Well, without being too technical, what is happening when you work in this way is that muscles can be overworked, nerves become tense and blood flow can be restricted. This might manifest itself as stiffness in the arms, legs, neck or shoulders or pain in one of these areas. The problem is that the pain might be "referred". This means that a problem in one part of the body might result in pain elsewhere. A strain in the neck could lead to a headache, for example.

You: But minor strains and pains don't sound very serious.

Prof Barr: Well, perhaps not, but if you do have a pain in the fingers, for example, the last thing you want to do is to start using them again the next day. And if injuries are not dealt with they can lead to more serious problems. I've seen office workers who have had to give up their jobs because they were in so much pain.

You: Can we do anything to prevent it?

Prof Barr: Fortunately yes. You might have heard of the science of ergonomics. This is the study of the working environment and how it can be made safer and more comfortable. I'm sure you'll find that things like well designed chairs, better lighting and the position of the VDU can all help. There's a lot of companies in the area that will advise you on this.

You: Is there anything else we can do?

Prof Barr: Well, sufferers can receive treatment – massage or physiotherapy can help. And to prevent RSI, workers should have regular breaks to have walks and "stretches". There's something else which doesn't help. People who work in an office and who might suffer from RSI come home and sit in front of a home computer sending emails or playing games. This is what we call "double-use".

You: Many thanks for your advice. You have given me a lot of ideas.

Task

Using the information in the conversation above, answer the following questions, **in your own words as far as possible**, to show your understanding of Repetitive Strain Injury. This will enable you to talk to Miss McCartney later.

- (a) What does Professor Barr mean by "an umbrella" when he describes RSI? (2 marks)
 - (b) What causes RSI in an office environment? (4 marks)
 - (c) Why can we not assess the long term effects of RSI? (3 marks)
 - (d) If someone is suffering from RSI, how might he or she feel? (3 marks)
 - (e) What happens when a medical condition is "referred"? (3 marks)
 - (f) What can a worker do to reduce the chance of suffering from RSI even if the office environment does not change? (3 marks)
 - (g) How can a specialist in *ergonomics* assist in reducing the effects of RSI in an office? (3 marks)
 - (h) Why "doesn't (it) help" that RSI sufferers "come home and sit in front of a home computer sending emails or playing games"? (4 marks)
- (25 marks)**

QUESTION 4

Situation

You work as an administrative assistant to Mr Bernard Krupinski, the Head of Civil Engineering for a large construction company. The company is based in London, United Kingdom, but works on projects all over the world. Mr Krupinski has been in Poland for a few days but he is expected to return to the London office this morning.

When you arrive in your office this morning you find the following message on your answer phone:

“Good morning, this is Bernard. I’m still here in Poland, I’m afraid, and I’m going to be here for three more days at least. We’ve hit a major problem in Gdansk with the Motlawa Bridge Scheme and I’m trying to sort it out now. By the time you hear this I’ll be on-site so I thought I had better leave a message.

“I’d like to ask you to do me a couple of favours. First of all, could you please water the houseplants in my office. You know that I don’t let anyone touch these (particularly Mrs Townsend) but if they aren’t given a gentle watering today (not too much!) they won’t survive.

“More importantly, please pass on my apologies to Oliver Larsen. I was due to attend the Project Meeting for the Borranquilla Development in Colombia today. Oliver chairs this meeting and I know he will be out of town until this morning. Could you please let him know that I’ll present my report on the exploratory excavations at the next meeting? Tell him there doesn’t seem to be any major problem. To be honest, I haven’t quite completed the report anyway, but don’t let Oliver know this! Oh yes, I would like to correct a small point from the minutes of the last Project meeting please. I don’t think the local company employed to do the land clearance is the La Plaz company. I forget the name but it’s in the file on my desk.

“Could you also gently remind Oliver that the details of the Colombian government’s subsidy should remain secret for the time being? It could be dangerous to announce this here before the press statement is issued in Colombia next week.

“I think that’s all – oh, yes, please don’t water the Paraguayan Cactus on top of the filing cabinet. It has to be kept as dry as possible. By the way, please send a memo to Oliver. He likes these things in writing rather than a telephone message.”

You look at the file on Mr Krupinski’s desk and find that the land clearance company referred to is Martinez Brothers.

Task

Write the memo about the Project Meeting to Mr Oliver Larsen.

(Total 25 marks)