

English for Business

Level 3

Past Papers **2008**

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English for Business

Level 3

Past Papers 2008

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There was no Series 1 in 2008

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Series 2 Examination 2008

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

Level 3

Thursday 10 April

Subject Code: 3041

Time allowed: **3 hours**

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

- Answer **all 4** questions.
- All questions carry equal marks.
- All answers should be correctly numbered, but do not need to be in numerical order.
- Adequate and appropriate communication is more important than a particular number of words.
- Check your work carefully.
- You may use an English or bilingual dictionary.

QUESTION 1

Situation

You are employed in the Administration Department of a manufacturing company, Palisades Products. The Company Manager, Mr John Strauss, recently gave you the following letter which he has received.

PREMIUM PUBLISHING

7A Douglas Mews
LONDON NW6 5UN

Thursday 3rd April 2008

Dear Sir or Madam

Michael Bashir

I would be very grateful if you could assist me. You might have heard of me; I have produced several biographies of famous sportsmen and women and I have now been asked to write a book on the life and career of Michael Bashir, the famous and well respected athlete who won gold medals at the Olympic Games in 1976 and 1980. As you will probably remember, Michael died two years ago so, sadly, I am not able to interview him. However, my research has indicated that Michael worked for your company for a short time in the early 1970's.

It would be very helpful if you could confirm when Michael was employed by Palisades Products and what his job was. If there are any members of your staff who were also employed by your company when Michael was with you, it would be very helpful if I could visit you to speak to them. I realise that we are now considering events which happened a long time ago but I know that many people have a very high regard for Michael and what he achieved and I hope to do justice to all of his experiences in my book.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours faithfully

Alan Debat

Mr Alan Debat

QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

Mr Strauss says this to you.

“I am familiar with Alan Debat’s work. He’s a very fine writer so I’d like to help him. I must say, I knew nothing about Michael Bashir working here. Of course, this would be many years before either of us joined the company. I’d like you to write to Mr Debat, please. I’ll sign the letter. Check with our Human Resources section first. They should have some details about his work here. Then you can check if any of our staff were employed when Michael worked with us. We do have some long-term staff who might remember him. If there are any staff, it would be good for us if Alan came here to interview them – we could benefit from the publicity, although you’d better not say it in such terms. Ask him to suggest a few dates next month and I’ll get back to him to confirm one.”

Your investigations reveal that four current members of staff were employed when Michael worked for Palisades Products. You speak to them and they tell you the following.

From Mrs Nicole Mayer: “Oh yes, I remember Michael very well. He was only with us for a short time but he was becoming quite famous locally as an athlete. Neither of us was married at that time, of course, and I got to know him very well outside of work. I’d be happy to speak to anyone about him.”

From Mr Alan Marcos: “Well, I started work for the company in 1969 so I must have been here at the same time as Michael, but I really can’t remember him. I believe he worked in the Research Department and I was in Despatch so our paths would probably not have crossed. Sorry.”

From Mr David Burak: “Not only do I remember Michael but he became a great friend of mine. I was lucky enough to see many of his athletic triumphs and I’d be delighted to speak to an author.”

From Mr Kurt Marec: “I remember someone called Bashir when I started work but I think it was George Bashir – he was in charge of the Sales Department. I know nothing about athletics or sport but I don’t think that he became an Olympic athlete.”

The Human Resources Section confirms that Michael Bashir was employed by Palisades Products from September 1971 to June 1973. He joined after leaving university and worked as a laboratory technician, mainly involved in the Research Section of the Product Development Department – the building he worked in is still in use.

Task

Write the letter to Alan Debat as requested. You can assume that the company’s headed paper is used.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

The company for which you work, SK Systems, has gradually introduced a no-smoking policy to all of its premises. Eventually there was only one room where smoking was permitted, an area next to the staff restaurant which smokers could use during breaks. This room was closed two years ago when the whole of the premises became a non-smoking area. The room has not been used at all since then. The company did have plans to extend the restaurant into this space but this is not now necessary. Management of SK Systems did tell the staff that the room would be used for recreation purposes if it did not become part of the restaurant.

You are secretary of the company's Leisure and Recreation Committee and the chair of this group, Mrs Marion Sempres, said this to you.

"You've probably heard that the old smoking room has been offered to us to use for some staff recreation purpose. We'd better do something about this quickly as I know that the Supplies Department would love to use this room for storage.

"Management have said that they don't want to spend a lot of money on the room but they are prepared to spend a small amount on things like painting and decorating.

"It would be very helpful if you could look into this matter. Perhaps you could check what the room is like now (it's been locked up for a couple of years) and ask around what staff would like us to do with the room. We have our next committee meeting coming up in three weeks, so please put together a report on what the options are – feel free to make a recommendation, of course. You'd better speak to the Manager of the Company first. His advice could be helpful."

You speak to the Company Manager who says this to you.

"We'd be pleased to see the old smoking room used again. We really don't mind how it's used but please remember that it can never go back to being a smoking room – this wouldn't be allowed now. Also we can't have anything to do with alcoholic drinks. Again, we're not allowed to do this. Oh yes, I'd better warn you that it's just not worth considering setting up a children's nursery or crèche – some staff are bound to press for this. Quite simply, the room isn't big enough to cater for more than a couple of kids and we'd have to employ trained staff, who don't come cheap. We know that we'd have to make huge changes to the room, like installing toilets and we'd have to prevent any unauthorised person from visiting the area, which just isn't practical. Sorry, but a crèche just isn't on."

You visit the room and make the following observations.

You can certainly tell what the room used to be. It still smells of stale smoke Urghh! There's no furniture left in the room and the carpet looks a bit worn. However, there's a lot going for the room. It's a good size and there are plenty of windows with nice views over the landscaped area near the main entrance. I see the electrics still work and, yes, there's a sink with hot and cold water. It looks pretty bleak, but nothing that a bit of paint couldn't put right.

You then ask the staff what they would like to see the room used for and the results are as follows. The figures refer to the percentage of those staff who responded.

| | |
|--|-----|
| Re-open as a smoking room | 5% |
| Use as crèche | 20% |
| Use as "quiet" staff room | 18% |
| Use as library or reading room | 17% |
| Use as bar selling alcoholic or other drinks | 2% |
| Don't know/care/others | 38% |

QUESTION 2

Typical comments for those who make these suggestions are as follows:

“It’s dreadful that smokers have to go outside now. It did no harm for us to have one room!”

“A crèche would be very well used. Many staff with young children would find this invaluable”.

“There’s a great staff recreation room but it is a bit noisy. The radio plays music and a lot of colleagues like to chat loudly. A nice quiet room where we could go for a bit of peace would be lovely.”

“A few of us have talked about this library idea. We don’t want it to be like a large public library, but some of us like a quiet read during breaks. If the company doesn’t want to buy in books, I’m sure staff would donate a few – we’ve all got spare books about the place.”

“The restaurant doesn’t sell alcohol so why not have an area where we can get a drink after lunch?”

“I never used the smoking room and I’m not sure I’d use this room at all. But if someone came up with an imaginative idea, I’d give it some thought.”

You realise that your notes are not in a good order so one of your tasks will be to organise these into a logical report which can be put to the committee. You can make an appropriate recommendation.

Task

Write the report using any appropriate, helpful style

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You are employed by a large company that has recently moved into new premises. These premises are excellent in many respects but you are finding it difficult to become used to working in a large open-plan office having previously been provided with a small personal room.

You speak to your colleagues; most of them are happy to work in such an office but a small number say that they have problems. They complain about a lack of privacy and the noise generated by many staff.

You decide to speak to the Human Resources Manager about the problems you face. You will then report back to your colleagues.

The text of your conversation appears below. When you have read this, answer the questions that follow.

- You: Good morning. Thanks for agreeing to see me. I think you know what I want to discuss.
- HR Manager: Yes. I believe you feel there are some problems with the open plan office.
- You: I do and I'm representing some of my colleagues who also have issues. I have to say, our stress levels are rising so I hope the problems can be remedied.
- HR Manager: Oh dear. I'm sure you are aware, we've had widespread praise from most staff. They find the large open plan office less claustrophobic and they like being close to their working colleagues.
- You: That's a fair comment. We "dissenters" are in the minority, but I'm sure you wish to help us. For example, is there anything you can do about the noise levels?
- HR Manager: Well, I must admit that open plan offices do tend to be more noisy than small single person rooms. Most staff don't notice this after a few weeks but we are considering some measures. We do plan to install "acoustic rated" ceiling tiles. This means they absorb sound. And if you are very sensitive we can put screens around your desk. We are reluctant to do this as it does negate the team interaction that is a strength of open plan.
- You: This all sounds very positive. What about moving those of us sensitive to noise to less central locations, perhaps in the corner near the windows?
- HR Manager: These are much prized locations. I feel people sitting beside a window are more likely to be distracted by what is going on outside!
- You: Well, I've been told that visual distractions decrease the disturbance from noise distractions.
- HR Manager: (Laughing) Well, I haven't heard this before. I'm not sure there's any validity in that! However, you will be interested to know that we are refurbishing the two small store rooms beside the main door and converting them into interview rooms. If any staff, for example, need to discuss confidential information, or meet a customer, these rooms can be used. If they are not being used for these purposes, you could use them from time to time, perhaps when you need complete silence to concentrate on something.
- You: That's great. I have thought of wearing headphones. I could even put a CD of soothing music into my PC. That would reduce my stress levels.
- HR Manager: I don't think we could agree to that! But noise-cancelling headphones, without the music, might help.
- You: You've given me a lot of ideas. I'll report your comments back to my friends.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

Task

Answer the following questions **in your own words as far as possible** to demonstrate your understanding of the points raised.

- (a) When the Human Resources Manager describes an open plan area as “less claustrophobic” what does he mean by this? What other suggestion is made as a reason why staff like an open plan office? (5 marks)
- (b) What is meant by the phrase “we dissenters are in a minority”? (2 marks)
- (c) What anti-noise measure can have a negative side affect? (3 marks)
- (d) What is meant by the term “a prized location”? (2 marks)
- (e) What do you understand by “visual distractions can decrease the disturbance from noise distractions”? (3 marks)
- (f) How might the conversion of rooms into interview spaces reduce the problem in an open-plan environment? (5 marks)
- (g) Having read the conversation and from any experiences you have had, give your own ideas on whether you feel an open-plan office is a good or bad thing. Give reasons for your answer. (5 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You are employed as the supervisor of the Administration Office of your local branch of Uvarov Products, a large national company. Uvarov Products has faced difficulties recently due to increased competition and the whole company has made a great attempt to reduce its costs in 2008 through its "Fight Waste" campaign.

The manager of the branch, Mr Nicholas Nkoto, recently said this to you.

"We seem to be having mixed results with the "Fight Waste" campaign. The manufacturing section's results aren't bad, you know. We asked them to reduce costs by 25% and they seem to be about on target.

But I'm sorry to say that the office costs are way off target. One of the things that worries me greatly, for example, is our photocopying costs. Do you know, our estimate of the number of copies we were going to make in 2008 was reached a couple of weeks ago, and we're not even half way through the year? I'm going to have to ask you to do something about this - a memo to everybody about photocopying is needed. We certainly shouldn't alarm anyone but we all know the possible consequences if the "Fight Waste" campaign isn't a success - there could be redundancies or even closure of the branch. However, you'd better be very careful what you say, of course, it won't do any good over-emphasising this.

So please give some thought as to how we can reduce photocopy costs. Remember, if fewer copies are made this saves ink and electricity, as well as paper! Before I forget, at the end of the memo you can remind your staff that we still must think about fighting waste in general. Do you know, this morning I went into the Accounts Department. The room was red hot because the central heating was on maximum, but all the staff were in shirtsleeves and the windows were open to cool down the room. I have to say, that was just stupid.

Anyway, photocopying is the main topic. From my point of view I wonder if all copying is necessary? A lot of copied material ends up in the paper bins. Was it necessary in the first place? Then there's the issue of using the copier for private purposes. I must admit, I've done this myself when I needed one or two copies; when my father died last month I did a couple of copies of the death certificate. But I caught one of our colleagues copying half a textbook for his student daughter. That's just not on! It's probably illegal as well because of the copyright laws.

I'm sure you have other ideas, so please stress to your staff that reducing photocopying costs is in all of our best interests."

You reflect on Mr Nkoto's comments and you realise that there are many ways that copying costs could be reduced. You know that staff do not always copy on to double sided paper. You have seen your staff forget to set a machine correctly and find that they get many copies when they only needed one. You have always believed that it is the responsibility of anyone who uses the machine to set it to "zero" after use, to prevent this from happening.

A junior member of your staff told you that at college she had been told to take one sample copy before carrying out a large "run". If there's then a problem, little paper is then wasted. You think this is a good idea.

You now have to produce a memo to all the staff in your department combining your ideas with those of Mr Nkoto. You decide also that it will be a good idea to produce a notice that can be displayed next to the photocopy machine to give concise advice in a clear format concerning the main things someone using the machine should remember.

QUESTION 4 CONTINUED

Task

(a) **Write a memo** as requested.

(18 marks)

(b) **Produce a suitable notice** that could be placed on the photocopy machine.

(7 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

Series 3 Examination 2008

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

Level 3

Friday 6 June

Subject Code: 3041

Time allowed: **3 hours**

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

- Answer **all 4** questions.
- All questions carry equal marks.
- All answers should be correctly numbered, but do not need to be in numerical order.
- Adequate and appropriate communication is more important than a particular number of words.
- Check your work carefully.
- You may use an English or bilingual dictionary.

QUESTION 1

Situation

You are employed by the Vortex Agency in the city of Northville, a company which organises holidays for its customers in the area. The company finds the most appropriate holiday for customers and then liaises with the holiday company to make the arrangements.

The company is managed by Mr David Stein. This morning, Mr Stein gives you the following letter from a customer.

29 River Street
Northville
NB4 6TY

3rd June 2008

Dear Sir or Madam

Recent Cruise "Latin American Delights"

You recently organised a cruise for my family. We toured parts of South America and the Caribbean from the 11th to the 18th of May on the cruise ship Hypolita.

We have enjoyed many cruises previously and we decided to book this one because it gave us the opportunity to visit the city of De Gozolo. We have visited many of the other ports of call on the cruise previously but we have never visited the country of Hospitia previously so we were looking forward to visiting De Gozolo, its capital city.

Unfortunately, as we approached De Gozolo, the ship slowed down suddenly and the captain announced that it was unsafe for us to visit De Gozolo. Not only that, but he also announced that we would now have to take a different route to our next destination, Santo Christophe. Eventually we arrived in Santo Christophe many hours later than scheduled and we were not able to make the visit to the summit of Mount Christophe which was advertised as one of the highlights of the tour.

Under the circumstances, I am sure that you would wish to offer us some compensation. To be fair, the Hypolita was an excellent ship and we enjoyed the rest of the cruise very much. However, as we missed two major highlights we feel that a refund is appropriate.

Yours faithfully

Felicity Lee

Felicity Lee (Mrs)

QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

Mr Stein says this to you.

“I’m always sorry when I hear about an unhappy customer. To be honest, the cruise that Mrs Lee booked for her family wasn’t inexpensive. It was a luxury cruise on a top cruise liner.

“I’d like you to respond to Mrs Lee, please. You’d better let her know that really this is not our responsibility. Once the booking is made, any issues are the responsibility of the cruise company. But between ourselves, I don’t want to lose Mrs Lee as a customer – she spends a lot of money with us! So do your best to apologise. It won’t do any harm to offer a small reduction on her next holiday but not more than 10% or we’ll not make much profit!

“I know that there was some sort of revolution in Hospitia during this cruise, but please check on the details. Could you also check on why the ship was delayed getting to the next port? I’m not sure why this was the case.”

You contact the owners of the *Hypolita* who point out that it is in the contract that all passengers sign that the company cannot guarantee that it will always make its advertised calls. There can be many reasons why this is not possible usually connected with the weather. The owners indicate that if Mrs Lee contacted them they would only offer an explanation and no compensation in this case. They tell you that the ship was approaching De Gozolo when it heard that there was fighting in the streets following political unrest. The government advised that it was not safe for anyone to land in Hospitia and advised the ship to leave Hospitia’s coastal waters immediately. To do this, a detour was involved which delayed the arrival in Santo Christophe.

You mention this to Mr Stein who says.

“OK, that sounds reasonable. I’m sure Mrs Lee isn’t interested in the politics of Hospitia, but make sure you stress that all actions were taken for safety reasons. She might feel better if she knows that her family could have been in danger if they’d gone ashore in De Gozolo.”

Task

Write the letter as requested. You can assume that your company’s headed notepaper is used.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You are employed by a branch of a telecommunications company, SK Products, that has recently become part of a large multi-national company, T-4 Telecoms. It is likely that many changes will be made to the way SK Products is organised and to how it operates. One change will be that your premises will now include a retail outlet as products will be sold directly to the public. It is proposed that the current SK Products staff will be integrated into the new company, although some might be carrying out different job roles.

The current Manager of SK Products, Paul Chaves, soon to be redesignated as the local Manager of T-4 Telecoms, has spoken to you about potential changes. He said this to you.

“As you can imagine, I’m very busy at the moment, but you can help me here. Management of T-4 Telecoms would like us to consider our policy on the way the staff dress. Now as you know, we currently don’t have a dress code, much less a uniform but the new company is keen to encourage us to consider if we could introduce something like this. To be fair to them, they don’t intend to impose a standard uniform across all their branches – at the moment at least! But they would like to ensure that all staff at each branch are dressed in a similar way, to make sure that visitors know who are staff and who are customers and to promote some sort of corporate image.

“I’d like you to do some research into this, and produce a report that I can put before the Operations Committee here at what will soon be called T-4 Telecoms local branch. You can speak to someone at Head Office, do some local research and let me have a clear, concise report which summarises what you discover – in a logical order please! The Operations Committee is very busy at the moment, of course, so please make our job easier.

“Of course, you shouldn’t make any recommendations – that’s the committee’s job - but a concise summary of the issues would be very helpful.”

Your notes on this topic are as follows:

From interviews with staff:

Four questions were put to the current staff. The percentage of staff responses were as follows.

| | Yes | No | Don’t know |
|--|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Would you be in favour of our branch introducing a uniform for staff? | 26% | 65% | 9% |
| Would you be in favour of our branch introducing a dress code for staff? | 65% | 15% | 20% |
| If a uniform was introduced, would you consider leaving the company? | 10% | 58% | 32% |
| If a dress code was introduced, would you consider leaving the company? | 4% | 89% | 7% |

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

A range of typical staff reactions.

“It depends very much on what this dress code/uniform is like. Few of us would object to something stylish.”

“Most companies now have some sort of dress code, so we shouldn’t complain if one is introduced.”

“I must say, some of the staff are very badly dressed. They would create a very bad impression with customers unless some sort of code was introduced.”

“It depends very much on who pays for these outfits. Many of us would accept a uniform, if the company paid for it!”

“If there was a dress code, it would save me a lot of bother! I wouldn’t have to think about what to wear each day!”

“I hate the idea of a uniform. It takes away our individuality. We’re not in prison, you know.”

“I think that it’s a good idea for staff who meet customers to have a dress code, or even a uniform. But is it needed for all staff? Some of us will never meet customers.”

You speak to the Head of Human Resources of T-4 Telecoms who says this to you.

“As you know, T-4 is expanding rapidly and we’ve taken over several small companies. It’s certainly true that eventually we would like to have a company-wide dress code but this is not part of our immediate plans – we’ve got more to worry about, to be honest!

“Where we have experience of dress codes, they have proved popular, even with staff who didn’t like the idea at first. A dress code is normally a limit to the style and colour of the clothes staff wear. At another branch in your area, for example, we ask all staff, men and women, to wear a white blouse or shirt with dark blue trousers or skirts. We have banned some types of footwear, particularly trainers, and the staff do say that they feel that they look smart. We don’t supply the outfits, but there is an extra clothes allowance in the staff’s salaries and wages.”

Task

Write the report, as requested, using any appropriate style.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

It has been announced by your government that next year, 2009, will be the “Year of Environmental Conservation.” There will be many initiatives to promote activities involving environmental protection, fair trade, staff involvement, growth of organic food and other issues of corporate social responsibility. This is known as “sustainability”. Businesses and other organisations are expected to practice “sustainability” and the government has introduced its “Top Ten” guidelines on how to adopt a sustainable workplace.

Your company is anxious to improve its sustainability profile and you have been asked to consider these guidelines with a view to implementing as many aspects as possible.

SUSTAINABILITY: TOP TEN GUIDELINES

1. Management systems:

Check that sustainability runs through all your management systems. Create a plan, set targets and goals and build in the sustainability aspect into all of your procedures. For example, do your customers/clients need to visit you, or must you visit them? Reduce the mileage covered by making use of technology (eg internet, email, teleconferencing etc)

2. Location:

Why is your company based where it is? Do many of your staff travel to work by car? A town centre location might reduce the distance staff travel to work and allow a greater use of public transport.

3. Size of Premises:

Large, ostentatious premises might have been good for your prestige in the past, but unused space burns money and resources. Research indicates that an average of 50% of a company's space is not used at any one time. Why not relocate to smaller premises?

4. Specification of Premises:

It is only in recent years that buildings have been constructed to high energy efficiency standards. If you have an older building, consider how it could be improved to reduce energy consumption.

5. Build in sustainability:

If you are expanding your premises or building new premises, make sure that sustainability is a major priority in design. This includes everything from using natural ventilation to planning your internal space to make best use of sunlight. Why not “recycle” the heat generated in one part of your operation (Computer rooms are often “hot spots”) to warm up another? (see No 6)

6. Regenerate:

Develop your ideas of being “energy positive”. Even in the gloomiest parts of the world, solar panels can allow you to generate your own power, as can windmills.

7. Relationship with landlord:

If you do not own your premises but rent them, remember that your landlord should also be striving to achieve the aims of the “Year of Environmental Conservation”. Work with your managing agent to follow a sustainability plan that promotes your corporate values.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

8. Supplier/stakeholder co-operation:

You should seek to do business with other organisations that share your ideas of sustainability. For example, you should not be shy in asking your suppliers what they are doing to promote sustainability.

9. Work Styles:

Look at the way you deploy your staff and consider if you can amend your style of working. For example, do all your staff need to travel to work when home-working is probably more efficient?

10. Staff behaviour:

However much the “generals” in charge of your organisation develop strategic plans, remember that your staff are the “foot soldiers” who carry these out. You must make sure the organisation’s ideals, and, above all, its enthusiasm for sustainability, are shared by all staff. Many positive ideas can come from staff at the bottom of the employment ladder as well as from those at the top.

Task

Using this information answer the following questions **in your own words as far as possible** to demonstrate your understanding of the issues raised.

- (a) Briefly, say what you understand by the term “sustainability”. (3 marks)
- (b) What two aspects of the company’s premises should be considered in order to maximise sustainable use? (4 marks)
- (c) What is the main problem of older buildings with regard to sustainability? (2 marks)
- (d) What is meant by “recycling” the heat generated in your building? (4 marks)
- (e) In some parts of the world there is very little sun but there can be strong winds. What form of power generation could companies use in these areas? (1 mark)
- (f) Why is it likely that the owner of your premises is a useful ally in your sustainability drive? (2 marks)
- (g) What is meant by the phrase “You should not be shy in asking your suppliers what they are doing to promote sustainability”? (3 marks)
- (h) Why does the writer use the terms “foot soldiers” and “generals” when mentioning staff behaviour? (3 marks)
- (i) Think about a company, a business or any organisation with which you are familiar and suggest either why you feel that they have become highly sustainable or give suggestions about how they could be more sustainable. (3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You are employed as an administrator in the offices of your local branch of the Hardy Shoe Company. The company sells a full range of shoes and is supplied by a range of manufacturers in various parts of the world.

Recently, a company with a similar name to yours, Hardies Shoes, has attracted a great deal of bad publicity. An investigative journalist has revealed many poor practices, some illegal, that he has proved have been carried out by Hardies Shoes.

He has made many accusations, from suggestions that the company works with manufacturers who pay very low wages in some areas, to complaints that the raw materials have been produced by methods that are cruel to animals. The directors of this company are said to have carried out many aspects of financial malpractice, including tax evasion.

As there is no local branch of Hardies Shoes in your area, many customers are confusing your company with this one and your trade is diminishing. The branch manager, Ms Mariel Pena says this to you.

“At first I thought it was amusing that people were confusing us with such a disreputable business as Hardies, but it’s starting to get serious, now. I’m not surprised to hear all these allegations about them, of course. Those of us who have been in the shoe trade for some time have known all about their sharp practices, but we had to be careful what we said - they’ve got some very good lawyers! However, I don’t think that they’ll get away with it this time – there’s too much evidence against them.

“The important thing for us to do is to distance ourselves completely from Hardies Shoes. Whenever this sort of thing happens, the reputation of all of us in the shoe trade suffers, and the name similarity only makes it worse.

“I’d like you to help us, now. I think it will be a good idea to send a memo to all our staff. Most will be aware of what’s going on, but there’s a lot of reassurance we can give them, and I’ll say more about this in a minute. I’d also like you to prepare a notice we can put up in all parts of the shop for customers. Now this is where it gets difficult. You can mention Hardies Shoes in the memo, but, to be safe, you’d better not use its name in the notice. Try to mention the confusion without using the name Hardies Shoes’, if you can! Make the notice brief, but eye catching.

“Although the notice can be brief you can go into more details in the memo. You’d better let them know what’s happened, in case anyone has missed the publicity. I’d like you to encourage all staff to make it clear to customers that we are not this dreadful company. In fact, I’d like to think our staff are spreading this message outside of work. The more that everyone in the area knows about this, the better. Be careful how you request this because we can’t really demand that our staff do anything outside of work, but if they can tell their family, friends, neighbours and the like, it should help our reputation.”

Task

- (a) **Write the memo** to staff as requested (18 marks)
- (b) **Produce the notice** that could be used in the store. (7 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

Series 4 Examination 2008

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

Level 3

Tuesday 18 November

Subject Code: 3041

Time allowed: **3 hours**

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

- Answer **all 4** questions.
- All questions carry equal marks.
- All answers should be correctly numbered, but do not need to be in numerical order.
- Adequate and appropriate communication is more important than a particular number of words.
- Check your work carefully.
- You may use an English or bilingual dictionary.

QUESTION 1

Situation

You are employed as Personal Assistant to the Manager of a branch of the National and Provincial Bank (NPB) in the city of Bridgeton. This morning the Manager, Ms Yvonne Cebula, shows you the following letter she has received from a customer.

38 Station Street
Lempark
LP4 9UN

Dear Ms Sebbula

17th November 2008

I am afraid that I must complain most strongly about the service I have received from your bank.

You might remember that about four years ago I opened a deposit account. I invested a large amount of money in your "Savings-Plus" account as you assured me that this was the account with the highest rate of interest available.

I now see that this is not the case. Your "Senior Saver" account offers a rate of interest a full one per cent higher than my account, and there is this new "Tracker" account which has an even higher rate. I decided to visit your branch on Saturday. As you know, the bank closed our local branch in Lempark so yours is now the nearest to me, even though I have to travel 35 kms to visit you. Unfortunately there was a major traffic problem in Bridgeton and it was about midday when I arrived. I was astonished to find that the main door was locked. I could see that there were customers still inside, so I knocked on the door but was told by a rather rude young man that you close at 12 o'clock and it was past that time. If it was, it was only a couple of minutes past.

As you will appreciate, I don't wish to visit your branch again but, unless you can give me a good explanation for all these issues, I will certainly close my account.

Yours sincerely

Leonard Afiah

Leonard Afiah (Mr)

QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

Ms Cebula says this to you:

“Oh dear. I never like to receive a complaint. I’d like you to draft a letter to Mr Afiah, for my signature. I see he’s spelled my name incorrectly, but he’s not the first person to do that, of course!

“I’ll mention what I know about these savings accounts but I’m much more concerned about the poor service he says he received at the branch. Look into this for me, please. The only “young man” on duty on Saturday was Adrian. Have a word with him please and start your letter with an explanation about Saturday. To be fair to Adrian, it is a rule of the bank that we close promptly at 12.00 on a Saturday although we can serve customers who arrive before closing time.

“Now, the accounts. He’s right about the higher interest rates in the accounts he mentions but the Senior Saver is only available to people over 60 years of age. If he is actually over 60, we should have recommended this account for him. Check on his age, please.

“As for the “Tracker” account, well this is an Internet account. If he wants to bank online that would be great, of course. It would also help to solve his problem of having to travel 35 kms to our branch. You’ll remember that I was very much against the closure of the Lempark branch, but please don’t admit this – we shouldn’t be seen to criticise company decisions.

“So please draft the letter for me; as I say, deal with the “bad service” issue first and then give him advice about his savings account. Be as polite as you can, please.”

You find that Mr Afiah was born on 6 March 1948 so he is now 60 years of age. However, he opened his account in January 2004 when he was 55 years of age.

You speak to Adrian who says this:

“Saturday was a dreadful day. There was some sort of accident in town which caused major traffic problems. We were really quiet for most of the morning then in the last hour we were rushed off our feet – I didn’t even have a break! We have been told that it is a strict rule that we don’t let any new customers in after 12 o’clock so I closed the door then and put up the closed sign. We still had a few customers inside. Someone did bang on the door about five or six minutes later and I did point to the closed sign through the glass door. I really don’t think I was rude, but to be honest, I was very stressed by this time.”

You know that Adrian is normally very courteous.

Task

Write the letter to Mr Afiah, as requested. You can assume that the bank’s headed notepaper will be used but you should include all other components of a business letter.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You are employed as an administrator in the Human Resources Department of a large company, *Primus Products*. The company's departments are located in many parts of your town and there are branches in other towns and cities in the area.

The company needs to organise many meetings for its staff. Many of these bring together staff from different departments and branches. In the past these meetings were held in hotels and conference centres outside the company. A year ago, a decision was made to hold all these meetings "in house" at the company's main office. Meetings are held in a refurbished suite of rooms and catering and other services are provided internally.

Many staff were disappointed when this decision was taken as they enjoyed meeting and sometimes staying in hotels. It was agreed that after a year the decision would be reviewed. You have now been given the task of preparing a report to review the success of the in-house training and the Human Resources Manager, Mr Kenneth Criswell, says this to you:

"I'd like you to produce a report that will then be presented to the Operations Committee. It's their job to decide if we continue with the in-house arrangements but I'd like to make recommendations on how we could improve on any issues that you identify without going back to using hotels.

"You will know that after each meeting we ask each of the staff who attended to complete an evaluation form. They can give their opinion on a scale from "very poor" to "outstanding" on a range of aspects of the meeting. I've done a summary of the responses we've received after all the meetings since we went "in house" and I've selected a range of typical comments from staff.

"Basically, I'd like you to summarise what has been good and what has been less successful concerning these meetings. Don't worry about any aspects of the content of the meetings. This would be the same whether they were internal or external. You concentrate on the accommodation and arrangements of the meetings."

The results from the evaluation forms are summarised in the table overleaf.

A selection of typical comments received.

"It's a lovely room. Shame the heating is not reliable!"

"Congratulations to the chef. The food is delightful."

"It's a pity when meetings are spoiled by equipment that doesn't work properly. I've never seen a PowerPoint presentation that didn't have problems!"

"Remember not all of us visit the main branch very often. The new block is difficult to find and the maps you provide are terrible. You don't indicate the one-way systems in the area!"

"I must say, I've been very pleasantly surprised – I was one who wanted to continue to use hotels. The lunches are wonderful."

"The room is great, very comfortable – but I nearly fell asleep. It was a bit warm!"

"I'm from outside the main branch and, once I found the place, I was made very welcome. There's plenty of car parking, of course, which is an improvement on some of the hotels we've used."

"I know everyone thinks the food is wonderful, and it is. But sometimes the desserts or sweets are too rich. Can't we have some fresh fruit, sometimes?"

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED**Percentage of staff responding**

| Feature of meeting | outstanding | very good | acceptable | not good | very poor |
|--|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Directions: how to find the venue | 8 | 14 | 31 | 39 | 8 |
| Car parking | 78 | 19 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| How staff are received at the venue | 62 | 25 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| Quality of furniture/décor | 83 | 15 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Quality/reliability of heating and lighting and equipment used | 5 | 10 | 27 | 39 | 19 |
| Quality of refreshments/meals | 84 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Overall view | 64 | 22 | 7 | 3 | 4 |

Task

Produce the report as requested using an appropriate format.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You are employed by a large manufacturing company, *Tracker Products*, in your area. The Health Ministry of the government of your country has recently introduced some legislation concerning the control of noise in industrial premises because there has been some concern over the numbers of workers who have hearing problems that could have been brought about by excessive noise in the workplace.

Your company is anxious to ensure that not only does it comply with the law but also that it lowers or eliminates any risk to employees who could be exposed to loud noises. The Health Ministry provides an Advisory Service and you have been asked to contact a member of this service, Dr Singh, who will answer your questions on the issues of noise at work.

You speak to Dr Singh on the telephone and the text of your conversation appears below. After you have read this, answer the questions that follow.

- You: Hello, Dr Singh. Thanks for agreeing to speak to me.
- Dr Singh: I'm very pleased to offer you my advice. This is a very important issue.
- You: Of course. First of all, could you please outline the changes in legislation that have been introduced recently?
- Dr Singh: The most important thing is that all employers now have an obligation to measure the noise levels in their premises, inform staff about these and provide hearing protection equipment when the noise is at a certain level. This equipment must be free of charge, of course.
- You: Right – so how do we measure these levels? When does the equipment have to be provided?
- Dr Singh: This is quite technical. You measure in decibels and the minimum levels when protection is needed have been reduced. To be honest, it is better that we don't go into the specific details at the moment, as this is very complicated. We can provide you with measuring equipment and then recommend the type of protective equipment you could need. It is probably better if I stress how important this issue is.
- You: Yes, please. Perhaps you could tell us what problems could arise when employees are exposed to loud noise.
- Dr Singh: Of course. In fact, this can damage the person's hearing. This can happen in four ways. Noise Induced Hearing Loss is the gradual loss of hearing that can develop over a long period of time to someone exposed to continual loud noises. This can be very gradual and possibly staff don't even notice it is happening until their hearing loss becomes acute.
- You: I see. So this is not the same as someone who is suddenly exposed to a loud noise, like an explosion.
- Dr Singh: No, this is the next category. It is called Acoustic Trauma and sometimes effects one ear more than the other – the ear that was closest to the sound. This isn't always permanent – you've probably experienced a temporary hearing loss yourself on occasions with no lasting damage.
- You: I certainly have. I went to a rock music concert last weekend and came away temporarily deafened by the noise!
- Dr Singh: Exactly. Now imagine the effect this has on the musicians who hear this every day. This leads us on to my next category. Sometimes damaged hearing does not just cause hearing loss but people can suffer from a condition known as Tinnitus. They appear to hear unpleasant noises, usually hissing, buzzing or ringing sounds but all of these come from the damaged eardrum. There's also a less common condition called Hyperacusis which means that certain sounds or sound levels cause discomfort when most people aren't affected.
- You: My goodness. So apart from providing equipment, is there anything we can do to reduce the risk to our employees?
- Dr Singh: Well, we have to accept that some industrial processes do produce noise. However, all employers should check the machinery they use. New, modern machinery often has noise-reducing features built in; older stuff might not have this.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

- You: But it could be expensive to replace our machinery.
Dr Singh: Yes, you can't do this overnight. But silencers can be fitted to old machinery; these aren't expensive. You can also reduce machinery noise by making sure it is installed or fitted correctly. A noisy, rattling machine might simply be fitted badly to the floor or a wall.
You: It occurs to me that we could also organise our staff rotas to make sure that our staff don't spend too much time in a noisy environment.
Dr Singh: Well, that's a good idea, but it's not a substitute for the other prevention measures we discussed.
You: Thank you very much, Dr Singh. You've given us a lot to consider.

Task

Using the information in the conversation, answer the questions below, **in your own words as far as possible**, to show your understanding of the points raised.

- (a) What do companies now have to do under the latest laws to protect staff against experiencing excessive noise? (3 marks)
- (b) What are "decibels"? (2 marks)
- (c) What could produce Noise Induced Hearing Loss in an employee? Why might the employee not realise that this condition has developed? (4 marks)
- (d) What is the difference between the type of noise that could bring about Noise Induced Hearing Loss and that which produces Acoustic Trauma? (4 marks)
- (e) What is the main difference between Tinnitus and Hyperacusis? (4 marks)
- (f) Why do badly fitted factory machines generate a large amount of noise? (3 marks)
- (g) What is the only suggestion that came out of the discussion concerning protection against noise related problems, that was not suggested by Dr Singh? (2 marks)
- (h) Think of any situation in a working environment when a large amount of noise is produced. Suggest how the employers in this situation could protect their employees. (3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You are employed as an administrator by *Warrior Workwear*, a company that produces specialist protective clothing for manufacturing companies. Your work involves assisting the Company Manager, Mr Rupert Marare.

As the staff arrived for work this morning they were horrified to discover that there had been a major fire at the rear of the building. Fortunately none of the production areas or the offices above these were damaged but the loading bay, the area where incoming materials were delivered and orders were despatched, has been completely destroyed.

After a busy day assessing the damage, Mr Marare meets you in the afternoon to discuss what is going to be done.

Mr Marare says this to you:

“Look, I’m afraid this fire could have major consequences for us all. The loading bay is really devastated. In fact the roof is unsafe. Until the whole area is rebuilt, we have to make sure that no one, staff or customers, goes into the area – it could be dangerous.

“However, confidence is everything in this business, so it’s vital that we stress to our customers that it is “business as usual”. In fact, as our production area is not damaged, we should be able to continue making our products. The problem is, it’s going to be difficult to receive our supplies and load up our delivery vans.

“In the short term, we have to come up with some temporary arrangements and I’d like you to send a memo to all our staff explaining what we are doing. As I say, the most important thing is that all our staff display to everyone that we are working normally. It must not go outside this room that we do face major problems. Is that clear?

“We now have to put an emergency plan into action. All materials, incoming or outgoing, have to come through the main entrance at the front of the building. I’ll be sending a letter to all of our suppliers telling them that the supplies should be delivered to this door. I know that there’s a problem with parking at the front, so I’ll have to stress that vehicles are allowed to park for 20 minutes only. After this, they could receive a parking fine.

“I suppose that this does not affect the staff, so there’s no need to go into details about parking, but please stress to all the staff that they’ll be seeing all kinds of things happening in the main corridor for the next few weeks. How long will repairs to the delivery area take? Well, your guess is as good as mine! But it’s going to take a month, at least.

“Basically, it would be very helpful if staff keep out of the main corridor as much as they can. There are ways of getting round the building by using other corridors of course.

“Sorry, I realise that I’m not giving these instructions in a good order, but, as I say, I’d like you to send a memo to all our staff. I’d also like you to produce a notice that we can place on the back door, in case the message about the new delivery arrangements doesn’t get through to our suppliers.

“Let me stress, it is vital that you give the impression in both the memo and the notice that this is not serious and the new arrangements will not cause any major problems.

“I hope you are able to sort out what you need to say to staff in the memo and what delivery drivers should be told. Many thanks for your help.”

QUESTION 4 CONTINUED

Task

- (i) **Write the memo** to staff as requested. (18 marks)
- (ii) **Produce a notice** to be attached to the rear door for the attention of delivery drivers. (7 marks)

(Total 25 marks)