

English for Business

Level 3

Past Papers **2009**

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Level 3

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Series 2 Examination 2009

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

Level 3

2 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 as an administrator by *Straight-to-u*, a company that sells a range of household products by means of mail order. The company does not manufacture any of their products but they do use very reputable suppliers. If any customers are not satisfied with any of the products they purchase they are able to return them and they will not be charged, providing they return them within 14 days and the products are in the same condition as despatched.

At the moment, your work involves assisting the Customer Services Manager, Mr Herman Charles. This morning, Mr Charles shows you the following letter he has received from an unhappy customer.

69 Central Boulevard
Riverdale City
RD9 7PG

1st April 2009

Dear Sir or Madam

Dishwasher tablets "Economix Special"

I am very sorry to have to report that I am very unhappy both with the product I purchased from you and the service I received from your so-called "helpline".

On 31st March I received my latest order of kitchen products from you. Your records will show that I am a regular customer and I have always been satisfied with your products and service. For this order, I decided to purchase a box of "Economix Special" Dishwasher tablets to use in my recently purchased dishwashing machine. When I used the product I found that my crockery and cutlery were not clean at all when I took them out of the machine. I ran through the process once again in case I had made a mistake, and I am sorry to say that there was little, if any, improvement.

I rang the helpline immediately and was told that I would be charged unless I returned the packet of dishwasher tablets, unopened. This is totally unsatisfactory. How can I find out if the tablets do not work unless I try them out? I have no intention of paying for his product and I will not be making any further orders from Straight-to-u until this matter is settled.

Yours faithfully

Edward Bassidas

Edward Bassidas (Mr)

QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

Mr Charles says this to you.

“Oh dear. I don’t like receiving letters such as this. A lot of our success is built on customers recommending us to friends and neighbours and a bad reputation can do a great deal of harm to us.

“Please investigate this matter. Donal Murphy from our Supplies Department should be able to tell you about the product and you should be able to check who took the call on our helpline. Fortunately all calls are recorded.

“When you’ve investigated the matter, please write to Mr Bassidas. I hope you can put his mind at rest. Even if it is not our fault you can tell him that we won’t charge him for the product on this occasion. If you think the helpline could have done better, again apologise. You can also offer him something – I’m sure we could go up to a 10% discount on his next order. We’ll still make a profit on most goods”.

Donal Murphy says this to you.

“The “Economix Special” is a new product but we always try out any item before we use it. We found that these dishwasher tablets worked well in most machines. In fact, I’d like to know the model of machine he used. I should say that many customers forget that they should use dishwasher salt in many machines as well as the washing tablets. If he didn’t use this, the items in the machine won’t be very clean. We provide dishwasher salt as well, of course.”

You check the customer service recordings and found a recording of Mr Bassidas speaking to an adviser called Rosa. Rosa was very polite and Mr Bassidas did appear to be saying that he should not be charged for the product. Rosa did explain the company policy that products need to be returned in perfect condition and Mr Bassidas terminated the call.

Task

Write a letter that could be sent to Mr Bassidas. You can assume that the company’s headed notepaper will be used.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You are employed as an administrator in the main office of *Beacon Products*. The company has expanded considerably during the last three years and the number of staff employed has more than doubled in this time.

The Head of the Administration Department, Mrs Olivia Pistone, is aware that many of the new administrative staff are not very experienced and some have had little more than basic training. She says this to you.

“As you know, I’m a little concerned that as we have grown, we haven’t managed to keep up with staff training requirements, particularly those of our administrative staff. I know most of our staff are hard working and keen to do well but I was talking to a group of our newer members of staff the other day and I was worried about what they said. They seemed to have little understanding of things like how to prioritise work; when I mentioned categorising work into urgent, important and routine jobs they didn’t know what I meant. I spoke to some of our supervisors and they reported that many staff had little idea about monitoring work or making contingency plans.

“It would be very helpful if you could investigate this further and let me have a report on what the main issues might be. I can then make a presentation to the Staff Development Committee. Please carry out any research you feel you have to do and produce the report for me. It would be helpful if you could make some recommendations about the main training needs of our staff.”

You decide to speak to the Head of Human Resources to ensure that you understand the issues and your notes of this meeting are as follows:

- Prioritising:* Ordering work so that urgent items are dealt with first before important and routine items.
- Urgent work:* Tasks which are crucial to the overall work of the company. Possibly close to the deadline for completion.
- Important work:* Tasks that need to be completed soon but are not urgent.
- Routine work:* Regular tasks that have no great urgency such as filing, tidying work stations, etc.
- Monitoring work:* Self monitoring involves a regular check on the progress of your work. Monitoring of junior staff is a responsibility of a supervisor.
- Contingency planning:* Being prepared for emergencies or unexpected problems/issues.

You do some research amongst staff and these are the results.

When staff are asked if they prioritise their work 19% said “Yes”, 72% said “No”, 9% said “What does this mean?” or something similar.

Typical comments were:

“My priorities are usually that I do what I enjoy first and do the rest later.”

“I just do the work in the order I get it”.

“We’ve never been told how to prioritise.”

“I know I should prioritise, but I don’t really know how.”

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

Staff were asked if they know the difference between “urgent” and “important” work. 21% said “Yes”, 58% said “No”, 21% said “Not sure”.

Typical comments were:

“It’s urgent if someone tells me it’s urgent!”

“Isn’t “urgent” work “important”? I thought it was the same thing”.

“Is “urgent” work that which takes longer and is more difficult?”

“I think both of these are different to “routine” but I’m not sure how they differ.”

You ask staff if they have contingency plans for their work. 10% said “Yes”, 41% said “No”, 49% said “Don’t know what this means.”

Typical comments were:

“I think contingencies are to do with having alternative plans, but I have to admit I don’t have those.”

“I asked my supervisor what a contingency plan was and she didn’t know!”

“I do know what this means but it is difficult to have such plans. I do give some thought to this, however. The other day I planned to do a lot of photocopying but I had a “plan B” if I found the photocopy machine was broken or occupied all day.”

You asked staff what type of training would help them to improve the planning and organisation of the work. A selection of responses was as follows:

“I know I don’t plan my work as much as I should. I’m told that there are all kinds of planning aids available but apart from keeping a diary, I don’t use any of these. I believe there are things like planners, checklists, reminder systems and something called critical path analysis, but I know nothing about this.”

“People tell me I should “monitor” my work. I’m not clear what this should entail.”

“I do know something about prioritising work into different categories. The problem is that other people here don’t know about these things. They give me work to do which interrupts my schedule!”

Task

Write the report to Mrs Pistone to summarise the issues concerning prioritising and categorising work by staff at *Beacon Products*, making recommendations for possible staff training.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

Your company, ARA International, has grown substantially in recent years and the management has had major difficulties in increasing and improving its administrative systems and functions.

The company has had many offers from organisations offering *outsourcing* services. You have been asked to investigate this further. You are aware that outsourcing means releasing some of your administrative tasks to organisations which carry them out for you, but you know very little more than this.

You are fortunate in that a conference on the topic of outsourcing has recently been organised in your area. You have been asked to attend the key-note speech by Mr Jacob Petrie, the Chief Executive of a major multi-national organisation. You should then be in a position to answer questions from your colleagues on this topic.

The transcript of Mr Petrie's talk appears below. After you have read the transcript answer the questions that follow to demonstrate your understanding of the issues.

Outsourcing – What's in it for me?

The fact that you are listening to me today means that you are considering outsourcing some or all of your company's administrative functions. Of course, other functions can be outsourced – this can apply to any production or service function. But administration is our focus today.

The first point I should make is that if you have made your interest public in any way you are likely to have been deluged with offers. If you have – take care! When you purchase anything, you will probably avoid rushing in to buying the first thing you are offered. If you are sensible, you will “shop around” for the offer that is most suitable for you. You should make a full investigation of what is available to you before you take the plunge.

You should also avoid any “all or nothing” deals. If you are offered a contract which covers all your outsourcing requirements then I would suggest that you avoid this like the plague. I know I am mixing figures of speech here, but I would suggest that you “cherry pick”. Make sure that your services are carried out by the organisation best suited to carry out that particular service. Of course, it might not be obvious which is the best organisation, so why not carry out “pilot” projects with your chosen organisations? No reputable organisation will refuse this and you are then able to make an early evaluation of the benefits and suitability for your organisation.

However, you should not have to use guesswork even for your first choice. If organisations offer to carry out your administration why not seek references from them, or, even better, arrange to meet their existing customers to find out how satisfied they are.

You should also bear in mind that when you are considering who should carry out some of your administrative or other functions there is always one organisation that you should not rule out – your own! Yes, before any decision on outsourcing is made you must think about what your organisation does best. You might be surprised to discover that you can carry out some of the services much better than any other organisation.

Once you have chosen your partners in outsourcing, there are two words that I would emphasise as summing up your relationship – EMPATHY and TRUST. The service provider should continue to understand your business needs and fully empathise with your aims and strategies. Once you have made your decision, you must always have a relationship with your outsourcer that is based on trust. You should trust them to get on with the work for the duration of the contract.

Remember, your decision to outsource is a major one and should not be taken lightly. The choice of a partner or partners is also a huge decision to make, but if you make the correct decision the benefits to your business are enormous.

Thank you for your attention.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

Task

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

- a Describe what you understand by the term “outsourcing”. (3 marks)
- b What happens to organisations that have announced that they wish to outsource some of their functions, and what is the danger to the organisations when this happens? (4 marks)
- c What is meant by “an all or nothing deal” and why should your organisation be wary of these deals? (4 marks)
- d Why does Mr Petrie say he is “mixing figures of speech” when he mentions “cherry picking”? (2 marks)
- e What is meant by “carrying out a pilot project” and why is this a good policy? (3 marks)
- f What are the two methods of assessing how good or suitable an outsourcing partner is before it carries out any outsourced function? (3 marks)
- g Why might you decide not to outsource all of your functions? (3 marks)
- h What is meant by the phrase “your service provider needs to empathise with your aims and strategies”? (3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You are employed in the Administration Department of your local branch of Weston Insurance Services (WIS). The company has a large office complex which has extensive car parking facilities.

Most staff and visitors use the main car park a few minutes' walk from the main entrance, but immediately outside the entrance are five spaces designated for the use of any car users who have a physical disability. These spaces are very clearly labelled "D" with a sign indicating that they should be used by disabled drivers only. The Branch Manager, Ms Eva Androtti, passes a memo she has received, as follows.

To: Ms E Androtti
From: George Nkula
Date: 2nd April 2009

Disabled Parking Spaces

I thought I should bring to your attention this matter in case you had not noticed. You will know that there are certain spaces for the use of disabled drivers next to the main door. The rest of us have to walk from the main car park. This can be an unpleasant experience when the weather is not good.

I have no problem with these spaces being given over to disabled drivers' parking. My father is disabled and we make great use of this type of space when we visit shops. However, recently the spaces seem to be taken by drivers who have no sign of any disability, often visitors to the company. They certainly don't display any disabled badges. A couple of days ago I saw a very fit young man park in one of the spaces and he then ran up the steps and into the building. I reported this in our Reception area but they told me he was a customer and that there was nothing that could be done. I really believe that if these spaces are for disabled drivers only we should enforce the rule. If they are not needed, why not let anyone park there on a "first come, first served basis"?

Ms Androtti says this to you.

"You know, I've got a lot of sympathy with George. Most of our staff respect the disabled spaces but, unfortunately, not all do, and he's quite right about visitors using the spaces. But there's little we can do. We are quite lucky in having such a large car park – I've never known it to be full to capacity. We have designated these spaces as "disabled only" but we don't have the resources to police this. Even if we did, this is private property so there's little we can do to enforce this. We can only rely on people's goodwill.

"It's undeniable these spaces make life much easier for disabled drivers, who will find it difficult to access the building from the car park. To be honest, no disabled driver has complained that he or she couldn't get into a disabled space, but it is important that this can never happen.

"I'd like you to reply to George. You can explain our difficulties in enforcing the rules about disabled drivers but there are a couple of things we can do. I'll have a word with our Reception Staff and suggest they remind any visitors who they see parking in one of the spaces that they are for disabled drivers only, particularly if they aren't displaying a badge or permit. I'm sure they can do this politely. We can also print a notice which we can attach to the "D" signs and also put on the cars that park in these spaces.

"I know you're good at this type of thing, so please prepare the notice as well as sending the memo. I'd just like you to remind anyone using the spaces that they are intended for disabled drivers only and make a polite request that they should park in the main car park. You can point out that this is never full."

QUESTION 4 CONTINUED

After being given these tasks, you realise that some visitors might not realise that there is a large car park at the side of the main building, accessed by the road to the left of the main entrance. It is signposted.

Tasks

- (a) **Write the memo** as requested to Mr George Nkuta. (18 marks)
- (b) **Prepare a notice** as directed by Ms Androtti. (7 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

Series 3 Examination 2009

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

Level 3

5 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 as an administrator at a local branch of a large retail organisation, *BTL Stores*, in your area. The company made an announcement some time ago that as from 1st June it will no longer accept cheques from customers as payment for items. It is now a few days after the new policy was introduced and various customers have complained. Some customers have stated that this diminishes customer service and others have queried how they should now make payments.

The local Store Manager, Mrs Barbara Politi, says this to you.

“Oh dear! As you know this was a decision taken at head office. I didn’t think it was a good decision, but please keep that to yourself.

“You know the arguments; we’ve had all kinds of trouble with cheques recently – stolen cheque books and all that kind of thing. It’s also a bit more expensive for us to process cheques and, to be honest, the company is desperate to push our store card to customers.

“I’m sure we’ll get more complaints, however, so I would like you to produce a letter that we can send to anyone else who complains. I know you’re good at this type of thing. Say that we are sorry about this, explain why we took the decision, and give some advice on how customers can buy things. Please have a word with John Finlay, the Finance Manager about this. Oh yes, I’ll sign the letter, of course. Actually, I think most companies are stopping cheque use now.”

You speak to John Finlay who gives you the following information about payments for goods.

Cash:	Always accepted – customers generally do not like this for large purchases.
Credit Cards:	All major credit cards accepted – no charge by us for these – very safe – we use “chip and pin” system – very secure – customers do not have to pay until end of month.
Debit Cards:	As above – except payment goes out of customers’ bank accounts immediately.
BTL Store Card:	Customers have an account with us – they pay when they receive monthly statement. Good for us – helps us build up customer profile on customers for promotions (NB: This last point not to be disclosed to customers) but customers receive credit-deferred payment.

Task

Write the letter which can be sent to customers, as requested. You can assume that the company’s headed paper is used.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You are employed by a large organisation that works in the financial sector, in the city of Rivermouth. The company, *Prideway Finance*, supports many local charities and organisations but has faced financial difficulties in recent years. The Company's Sponsorship Committee is now making a difficult decision on which organisations it can no longer support.

The company has supported a children's theatre group for five years now. It is now widely known that the company's Finance Manager, Mr Sanaki, feels that this support should come to an end but the Public Relations Manager, Miss Campos, strongly believes the support should continue. The Company Manager, Mr Brian Clegg, knows that you do not have any views on this, and he has suggested that you speak to these two managers to find out the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining support. You can then produce a report on this issue, including recommendations which might or might not be accepted.

The discussion went as follows.

- You: Well, you know that we are here to talk about our sponsorship of the *Kidsways Theatre Group*. Currently we give them \$10,000 per year and they promote our company by putting up posters at their shows, printing our names in their programme and the like. So, Mr Sanaki, why are you not happy with this support?
- Mr S: Well, it's not that I have anything against children's theatre – in fact, my nephew was a member of this group. But, as you know, we must reduce our sponsorship budget by at least 50%. Quite simply, there are better causes that we should support such as the local hospice, cancer research, etc. But I know that Miss Campos takes a different view.
- Miss C: It's a great shame that we have to reduce our sponsorship budget, I think. I would say we get good value from it! But I know that this was a decision at Board level. Now Mr Sanaki, you know that *Kidsways* would probably close without our sponsorship. The other organisations you mention are very worthy causes, but they will continue without our support.
- Mr S: Perhaps – but we have to take a business view. How many of our potential customers attend *Kidsways* shows? Not many, I suspect. And the children themselves aren't going to give us any business, are they?
- Miss C: Oh come on! Children today will be adults one day and can become customers. And their parents could be customers now! But anyway, we can't bring everything down to profit and loss, can we? Remember, if the Theatre Group finishes, a lot of these children will have little to do. You can imagine the mischief they might get up to!
- Mr S: I don't think it's our job to solve such problems. It's up to the Council or the Government. We must think of our financial situation.
- Miss C: OK– Fair comment. But it doesn't look good for us if we are seen to be contributing to juvenile delinquency. I'm exaggerating, of course, but \$10,000 is not a lot to promote our image as a caring company.
- You: I can see you are not going to agree on this. What would you say to the suggestion that we compromise and reduce the amount we give?
- Mr S: That would satisfy no-one! We have to reduce our budget and if we do not withdraw this sponsorship we'd have to cut contributions to more worthy causes.

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

Miss C: Believe it or not, I agree! *Kidsways* needs our \$10,000 in order to run. If we reduce this they'll have to stop anyway, unless they can get sponsorship elsewhere. This is unlikely as most local firms are in the same position as us.

You: Thank you both for sparing your time. I'll have to give this some thought now, but, of course, the Sponsorship Committee will make the final decision.

Task

Write the report using any appropriate style.

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You are employed by a large company, *KA Foods*, which packages various food and drink products for retailers. The company has a good reputation not only as a producer of high quality products but also as a socially responsible trading organisation. You have heard recently that many specialist coffee manufacturers provide support to farmers in the areas where coffee beans are grown. You have been asked to give a talk to company staff on this topic and you have found the following article which will help you prepare for this.

WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE

Few products have achieved such international acceptance and popularity as coffee. It is drunk and enjoyed by countless millions of people worldwide and with only rare exceptions it is not prohibited by religious or cultural groups. Some of the more outrageous claims of its value as a health-giving medicine have been discredited but most people now believe that when drunk in moderation it has no harmful properties. Its only serious rival as a world-wide beverage is tea but this is associated more with specific parts of the world, usually where English is spoken.

Although its consumption has spread worldwide, it is prepared in many different ways to satisfy local taste. In East Africa, where coffee bean growing began over a thousand years ago, boiled coffee pulp is mixed with milk (often from a goat) to produce a thick, creamy mixture, which is very different from the drink enjoyed in the burgeoning coffee culture of Europe or North America.

However, all coffee is derived from the coffee bean, which is grown in a limited number of areas in the world. Its original birthplace, East Africa, is still a major area for coffee bean growing, but where growth conditions are similar, for example in South America, the coffee bean is a popular crop.

There are still some allegations that coffee producers exploit local farmers or growers and make huge profits by paying very low prices for the product. Fortunately, such allegations are becoming increasingly rare as producers and retailers have realised that their support can make a huge difference to the quality of lives of people who live in coffee-bean growing areas. In particular, an organisation supported by producers and retailers, *CARE International*, is sponsoring a wide range of initiatives in these areas.

The cynical could argue that it is in the self interest of wealthy companies to secure the supply of their product. This is debatable, but what is undeniable is that huge progress has been made. Growing areas have traditionally suffered from erratic patterns of rainfall and drought conditions so assistance with the design of reservoirs and irrigation systems can improve local growing conditions greatly. Farmers have benefited from training in the latest techniques of crop diversity and crop rotation.

Schemes to improve local literacy rates can empower farmers to help themselves to research and develop their ideas, and improvements to roads can ensure that the coffee beans, often grown in hilly areas, can be easily transported to the nearest port for distribution.

It is simply not true to state that these are actions carried out only to boost the profits of already wealthy companies. There are many other less visible projects to improve the well being of the people of coffee bean growing areas and altogether these are genuine demonstrations of what can be achieved when companies become aware of their social responsibilities and engage with local people.

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) What is meant by the phrase “with only rare exceptions it (coffee) is not prohibited by religious or cultural groups”? (4 marks)
- (b) What has happened to the earlier claims about coffee being good for you and what is the current view on whether it is harmful? (4 marks)
- (c) Why is the coffee culture of Europe and North America described as “burgeoning”? (2 marks)
- (d) Why is it suggested that coffee producers do not now exploit local farmers and coffee growers? (3 marks)
- (e) Why is it said to be “cynical” to argue that it is self-interest that drives producers to assist local farmers and coffee growers? (3 marks)
- (f) What extreme weather conditions can affect farmers in coffee growing areas, and how can some of the problems they bring, be solved? (4 marks)
- (g) What is meant by “schemes to improve local literacy can empower farmers to help themselves”? (3 marks)
- (h) Give your opinion of coffee drinking. Give reasons why you drink coffee regularly or why you drink it very rarely, or not at all. (2 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You work in the Sales Department of a large manufacturing company, *Unitherm Products* as Deputy to the Manager. The company is expanding and the Sales Department has outgrown its current accommodation. A large extension to the premises is now nearing completion and the staff of the department are all looking forward to moving in to new purpose built accommodation in two weeks time.

This morning the Sales Manager, Mr Fritz Eckhart says this to you:

“Bad news about the new extension, I’m afraid. The bit of the building that we are moving into has to be rebuilt. It’s something to do with the fact that we didn’t get proper planning permission to build the new offices so close to the main road so there’s going to be a part demolition and a rebuild. When it is rebuilt, our new office could be somewhat smaller, and a different shape! I’m afraid someone has made a major error here, but there’s nothing we can do about it now.

“I’d like you to arrange a meeting for all our staff on Tuesday 9th June. We’ll have to let them know that we’ll now not be moving. Please send a memo to all staff in our department telling them about the meeting. You’d better let them know what it’s about, but for goodness sake don’t disclose the full reasons for the delay – that’s between ourselves at the moment. However, I do have a few ideas on how we can cope until we move, so I will announce these at the meeting.

“I’d like to hold the meeting in the morning, say 10.30, in the Committee Room, if it is free. Please check this with our Facilities Manager and book it for the meeting, if you can. If we can’t use this room, just arrange it for whenever he is free.”

You speak to Mrs Patel, the Facilities Manager, who advises you that the Committee Room is fully booked and no other rooms are available. She suggests that you use the Staff Common Room. This room is not used very much in the morning, but she suggests that as staff from other sections sometimes use this room, you will have to put a notice on the door to apologise to these staff and tell them that the room cannot be used as a common room while the meeting takes place. She also suggests that you vacate the room by 12 o’clock as many staff will want to use the room at lunchtime.

You report the change of venue to Mr Eckhart and he says this to you:

“OK, the Common Room is fine. But I’ve already heard rumours about the new building which are totally false. The best one I’ve heard is that the whole extension has been declared unsafe and is going to be demolished – what nonsense. When you send the memo, you could tell staff to ignore any such rumours. I’ll do my best to come up with a sensible explanation!”

Tasks

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

(19 marks)

(b) **Produce a suitable notice** to be placed on the door of the Staff Common Room.

(6 marks)

(Total 25 marks)