

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification

Leading Managing and Developing People

May 2015

28 May 2015 09:50 – 13:00 hrs

Time allowed – Three hours and ten minutes
(including ten minutes' reading time)

Answer Section A and five questions in Section B (one per subsection A to E).

Please write clearly and legibly.

Questions may be answered in any order.

Equal marks are allocated to each section of the paper.
Within Section B equal marks are allocated to each question.

If a question includes reference to 'your organisation', this may be interpreted as covering any organisation with which you are familiar.

The case study is not based on an actual organisation. Any similarities to known organisations are coincidental.

You will fail the examination if:

- You fail to answer five questions in Section B (one per subsection, A to E)
and/or
- You achieve less than 40 per cent in either Section A or Section B
and/or
- You achieve less than 50 per cent overall.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

SECTION A – Case Study

Note: In your responses, you are allowed to improvise or add to the case study details provided below. However, the case study should not be changed or compromised in any way.

The Barnacle Bay Country House Hotel, known affectionately as 'Barnacles', is located on the Scottish coast in a rural setting a few miles from a prosperous market town. Boasting 100 en-suite bedrooms, a sizeable restaurant, an outdoor swimming pool and a nine-hole golf course, the hotel has remained an independent, family-run business for over 70 years. Its hey-day was in the 1950s and 1960s when wealthy clients from all over the world would rub shoulders with high-profile celebrities and members of royal families in its chic cocktail bar overlooking the sea.

Barnacles still returns a profit, but its old school charm is now waning fast and its glamorous past is increasingly fading from people's memories. The business retains a loyal clientele who come back to stay year after year and many local families remain very fond of its traditional Sunday lunch menu. But these groups are now ageing quite quickly and are diminishing in number. What is more, a big new threat is now looming on the horizon. Peacock Hall - a large stately home a few miles away from Barnacles - has recently been converted into a plush, four-star hotel and is about to open its doors with a loud fanfare of publicity. With its health spa, leisure club, stunning bridal suite and hi-tech conference facilities, Peacock Hall represents a serious threat. For the first time in its history, Barnacles will soon be facing some serious, direct, local competition.

Barnacles is a major local employer, having always preferred if it can to employ people from nearby communities. Of its 75 staff, 55 come from its immediate locality. The remaining 20 are mostly from overseas and are employed on a live-in basis, occupying a range of cottages located on the estate. Employee turnover is very low in comparison with most hotels, a majority of its staff having worked at Barnacles for over five years. They know the regular clients well and enjoy serving them in their established easy-going and rather informal style. Absence levels are also low. In short, the staff are a highly committed, loyal and well-motivated team.

Rita Clement is the current owner-manager of Barnacles, having inherited the property and its estate when her father died five years ago. Rita is deeply committed to the business, having worked in it all her adult life, but she is painfully aware that major change will need to be introduced quite quickly if it is to prosper and survive in the future. To that end she has secured substantial funding from the bank to finance a wholesale refurbishment of the hotel. There will soon be new carpets, new furnishings, new decor and a new indoor pool with a sauna and gymnasium close by. A new, more modern menu has also been created alongside a more extensive (and much more expensive) wine list. But Rita knows that all this investment will be wasted if Barnacles does not also smarten up its act as far as its standards of service are concerned. Only if that too is moved up-market will Barnacles be able to compete effectively with Peacock Hall. What is more, the hotel is going to have to become a great deal more efficient in its operations if it is to be put on a sound, future financial footing. It is also going to have to develop far greater organisational agility so that it can take swift advantage of new business opportunities whenever they arise.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

There are some particular staffing issues which Rita believes are symptomatic of the wider challenges that Barnacles faces:

- There is far too much slack time. The staff, almost all of whom are employed on full-time, permanent contracts, tend to be kept very active for a few hours each day when their departments are busy, but seem to spend the rest of their shifts chatting to one another and to the regular guests.
- By contrast, when the hotel is busy (e.g.: in the summer months, at Christmas time and at weekends when it is hosting weddings and banquets) staff are run off their feet. Long queues develop at the bars, at breakfast time in the restaurant and at reception. At these times the hotel appears understaffed and this is a major source of customer complaints.
- Standards of cleanliness are not good enough. Too often guests are checked into rooms that have not been serviced sufficiently thoroughly and have to be moved when they complain. Attention to detail is also lacking during big banquets. Guests sometimes get served the wrong dishes or food which is cold. This is unacceptable given the amount of money they are paying.
- Reports which Rita recently commissioned from two 'mystery shoppers' make painful reading. While the hotel scored highly for its friendliness, these guests felt that they were kept waiting too long for service and that employees were often unwilling to fulfil perfectly reasonable requests for items such as more lavatory paper, de-cafeinated coffee and a map of the locality. 'Charming but inflexible' was the verdict of one mystery shopper.

Rita Clement has recently appointed a new HR and Training Manager at Barnacles. He/she has been given the following objectives for the first three months:

- to develop a strategy to help the hotel achieve 'wholesale cultural change',
- to reduce the total wage bill by 10% by deploying staff more efficiently,
- to take steps to reduce the number of customer complaints by 25%.

However, Rita stresses that she is very keen to introduce the changes that are necessary without damaging staff morale or their level of engagement. While becoming more responsive, flexible and professional in its approach, Barnacles must retain its reputation for friendliness along with its existing customers. Rita is also very keen to avoid losing her best staff to Peacock Hall when it starts recruiting.

PLEASE TURN OVER

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

1. What initiatives could be introduced at Barnacles to deploy staff more effectively while also reducing the wage bill and maintaining existing levels of commitment? Justify your answer.
2. Why might 'wholesale cultural change' be difficult to implement speedily at Barnacles? What lessons can managers learn from published research to help them design successful cultural change programmes?
3. What role might the introduction of innovative reward management practices have to play in helping to achieve Rita's objectives? Justify your answer.

It is recommended that you divide your time equally between these three tasks.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

SECTION B

Answer FIVE questions in this section, ONE per subsection A to E. You may include diagrams, flowcharts or bullet points to clarify and support your answers, so long as you provide an explanation of each.

A

1. The CIPD recently published a research report entitled 'Putting Social Media to Work: Lessons from Employers.' It concluded that a range of positive outcomes could be achieved from the creation of 'gated enterprise social networks' (i.e. social media platforms created for the exclusive use of people who work in a single organisation), but only if they were managed with some care.

- i. In what different ways might organisations and their employees benefit from the establishment of a gated enterprise social network?

AND

- ii. What risks might an organisation be taking in establishing such a network? What steps could be taken to minimise these risks?

OR

2. One important outcome of the 'Black Box Studies' conducted by Professor Purcell and his colleagues at the University of Bath was the popularisation of the 'AMO model'. This was found to be very helpful in explaining the substantial differences the researchers observed in the relative performance of different business units operated by the same companies.

- i. Explain what AMO stands for and why the model has been so influential in recent years.

AND

- ii. In what ways might your organisation make better use of AMO in its HRM and HRD activities? Justify your answer.

PLEASE TURN OVER

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

B

3. Recent thinking on leadership in employing organisations has tended to conceive of effective leadership as 'an organisational capability' rather than as a set of attributes or behaviours possessed by individual senior managers. According to this perspective, followers (i.e.: those who are led) play as important a role in determining the quality of leadership in an organisation as the leaders themselves. It follows that effective leadership in organisations is achieved through processes which continually seek to improve the relationship between leaders and followers.
- i. Drawing either on examples from your reading or your own observations, explain how far you agree with this perspective on effective leadership. Justify your answer.

AND

- ii. What could the HRM and HRD functions in your organisation do to help followers contribute to improving the effectiveness of its leadership?

OR

4. Several recent research studies have demonstrated that only a small proportion of first line managers in the UK see themselves as leaders. As a result they focus a great deal more time and attention on working towards the achievement of departmental objectives than they do on supporting their team members. They tend not to be very interested in developing their people or improving their well-being, and rarely even seem to consider their long-term interests. A surprisingly large minority say that they never meet with the individuals they manage on a one-to-one basis.
- i. Why do you think this state of affairs exists? What are its consequences for organisations?

AND

- ii. What lessons can be learned from your own experience and observations about how line managers can be encouraged to be better leaders of people?

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

C

5. HR managers, consultants and researchers often disagree about how an organisation should deploy its limited resources in order to maximise the value it gains from talent management programmes. Some argue in favour of an elitist approach in which developmental activities are focused heavily on the most talented individuals. Others argue in favour of a much wider distribution of resources, effectively including all employees who have the capacity to develop within the definition of 'talent'.

- i. What are the major advantages and disadvantages of these opposed points of view?

AND

- ii. What approach to talent management would you prefer to see adopted in your organisation? Justify your answer.

OR

6. Despite 40 years of public policy aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and deterring discrimination in employment, published statistics show that women and members of many ethnic minorities continue to be paid less than white men and enjoy fewer employment opportunities. In the case of women, the presence of a glass ceiling continues to prevent progress to the most senior levels in many organisations, while gaps open up between people of different racial backgrounds at a much earlier stage in our careers.

- i. Drawing on your own experiences and observations, explain why substantial gender and racial inequality persists despite decades of public policy initiatives designed to bring about greater equality.

AND

- ii. What key points would you include in the business case for a proposed new 'equality and diversity drive' in your organisation? Justify your answer.

PLEASE TURN OVER

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

D

7. Surveys are regularly carried out among university students asking about where they would most like to work after graduating. These reveal a strong preference for the larger, private sector companies. With the notable exception of the BBC and the Civil Service Fast Stream, the prospect of working in the public sector only seems to appeal to a small minority of students.

- i. Why are so few students attracted to the idea of working for major public sector employers?

AND

- ii. What steps could these employers take to improve their attractiveness in the graduate recruitment market? Justify your answer.

OR

8. As far as their HR systems are concerned, international organisations tend to prefer to harmonise what they do across their global operations. As far as possible, managers like to use the same standard recruitment, reward, HRD, employee relations and performance management practices everywhere that they employ people. However, in practice they often find that standardisation is difficult to achieve, resulting in a variety of local adaptations.

- i. Why do global organisations prefer - where they can - to standardise their HR policies and practices?

AND

- ii. Explain why this is often very difficult to achieve in practice.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

E

9. Organisations are coming under increasing pressure to operate in a more environmentally sustainable manner by using less energy, reducing business travel, generating less waste, recycling more and discouraging staff from commuting to work in private cars. Some organisations have been much more successful than others at advancing this agenda.

- i. Why is it often very challenging for organisations to make genuine and rapid progress towards the introduction of more environmentally sustainable practices?

AND

- ii. What steps could your organisation take to improve its record on environmental sustainability? What contribution could the HR function make to help ensure a successful outcome?

OR

10. In recent years it has become the norm for formal public inquiries to be held following major corporate scandals, management failures and fatal accidents. These frequently find that people in the organisations concerned often knew of potential dangers or of malpractice, but had felt unable either to raise concerns internally or to pursue them externally. The inquiry into the Piper Alpha tragedy, for example, found that 'workers did not want to put their continued employment in jeopardy through raising a safety issue that might embarrass management.' This is often the result of an attitude on the part of senior managers which views whistle-blowers as disloyal troublemakers, particularly when they disclose their concerns to media organisations.

You are asked to advise HR managers in a high-profile organisation that is considering introducing a formal whistleblowing policy and procedure for the first time.

- i. What advice would you give about the content of the policy and the procedure?

AND

- ii. What advice would you give about a business case for the introduction of such a policy and procedure?

END OF EXAMINATION

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

BLANK PAGE

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

Introduction

A total of 284 candidates sat the Leading, Managing and Developing People exam in May. Their overall performance was as strong as that of most recent cohorts, achieving a pass rate of 76%. However, it was also the case that there were rather more fails than marginal fails this time around, suggesting that a higher proportion of the candidates struggled with this paper than is usually the case. The third question in Section A seemed to cause quite a few difficulties, possibly because it was unexpected, as did Questions 3 and 6 in Section B and to a lesser extent, Question 10. By contrast, at the top end standards were outstanding. We were delighted to be able to award distinction or merit level marks to over a quarter of the candidates, which is something that can only be achieved with a great deal of effort and some good teaching too.

The papers were marked by Elisabeth Wilson, Krystal Wilkinson, Andrew Hambler, Claire Roberts, Graham Perkins, and myself, Krystal undertaking a good portion of the moderation duties on this occasion.

The overall breakdown of marks was as follows, but as always, these statistics obscure the marked differences we observe between groups of candidates sitting at different centres.

May 2015		
Grade	Number	Percentage of total
Distinction	11	3.9
Merit	60	21.1
Pass	143	50.4
Marginal Fail	22	7.7
Fail	48	16.9
Total	284	100

Section A

Learning outcomes: 4 and 2

Task 1

Deploying staff more efficiently and effectively is not difficult to achieve at Barnacles because they are not at all well-deployed at present. As many candidates pointed out, this could be achieved by introducing split shifts, employing people on zero-hours contracts and bringing in temporary staff. However, these kinds of approaches might well reduce commitment and hence motivation/engagement levels and so are probably not the best solution for this particular scenario where retaining engagement levels and retaining staff were specifically included as a priority. However, where candidates made a specific case, by recommending - for example - asking for volunteers interested in reducing their hours, marks were picked up. There was also some potential scope for moving in this direction with new hires, but for existing staff the aim should be to find ways of increasing efficiency without losing their support.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

The highest marks therefore went to those who advocated the adoption of forms of 'mutual flexibility' as developed by researchers such as Peter Reilly (even where this terminology is not used). The key at Barnacles is to introduce forms of flexible working which are attractive to staff but which also allow costs to be cut through more effective deployment of people. Multi-skilling/functional flexibility potentially have a big role to play here and were written about with confidence by the stronger candidates. It would allow people to be moved between departments at different times of the day/week/month/year while also increasing their employability and giving them greater task variety. Term-time contracts might be another initiative that could help, as could flexi-time or annual hours schemes which reward people with additional time off when they work longer hours at busy times. The strongest answers recognised that whatever was decided, changes should as far as possible be introduced with consent and if at all possible with the active support of staff who were going to be affected. Involving people in the development of the deployment plans would thus be wise, as would substantial investment in timely and effective training interventions.

Task 2

On the whole this was answered well, although some wrote about change management in very general terms, without focusing specifically on changing the culture of the organisation as was required by the question. It is always difficult to bring about cultural change of any profound kind in an established organisation, particularly in one like Barnacles which has long-established cultural traditions which are deeply embedded among a group of long-serving staff. Like turning an oil tanker around at sea, great care must be taken as well as sufficient time. There is likely to be resistance here from staff who do not want to change their attitudes and see no need to do so. There also may well be resistance from older clients who like Barnacles as it is and fear being alienated by innovative practices and more up-market standards of service. The main lessons from the research are to plan change carefully, to communicate the need for it clearly and effectively, to involve people in planning and implementing it, to reward people when they demonstrate a willingness to change and to be willing to slow down/act pragmatically as and when necessary. Change agents need to act in an emotionally intelligent way in order that steadily, over time, new attitudes are embedded. Stronger candidates cited features of some of the well-known models of effective change management (Kotter, Lewin etc) although too often these were simply recited without any attempt being made to tailor their content to the particular needs of this case study organisation. One or two also demonstrated awareness of more recent research studies which emphasise the need to manage organisational politics carefully when implementing cultural change. In this case, of course, long-term organisational survival is at stake. So making a compelling business case for the need to change is not difficult. The challenges concern detailed implementation.

Task 3

This was the question which caused some candidates to lose marks and I suspect this was largely because it was unexpected and had not therefore been prepared at all in advance. We were not looking for any detailed knowledge of different reward management systems, but some awareness of their potential role in situations like this where change is being actively promoted. We do not know from the case what reward systems are currently in place at Barnacles. We can perhaps assume from the facts of the case that pay is sufficiently generous to retain staff effectively, but we also know that to date there has not

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

been a significant labour market competitor. The vast majority of candidates agreed that reward management has a major role to play in bringing about the objectives that Rita has set, but often the analysis presented was rather shallow and limited. Too often, in particular, candidates took the view that financial forms of reward were inappropriate for cost reasons. This is not true. As has been shown repeatedly by researchers such as Jeffery Pfeffer, it is perfectly possible to reduce the total pay bill of an organisation while paying people more if they are more efficiently deployed. In other words a win win situation can readily be engineered in which staff are paid more while labour costs fall, simply because fewer people are required at quieter periods. This does not mean that candidates were wrong when they advocated non-financial forms of reward (employee of the month awards, staff discounts, praise and recognition etc), but that it was insufficient to focus only on non-financial rewards in order to obtain the highest level of marks. There is also a strong tendency to be uncritical when writing about non-financial rewards, it simply being assumed that they all work equally well as motivators in all situations.

Individual performance-related pay might provide a means of incentivising changed attitudes in this organisation, but it might also be divisive as far as team spirit and staff morale is concerned as some will inevitably be rewarded more than others. Team-based incentives may have the most mileage in this kind of situation, and particularly gain-sharing and profit-sharing schemes. Creating a sense of shared purpose and interest between employer and employee is necessary if cultural change is to happen and stick. It helps to reduce resistance and make people feel that they have a stake in the organisation they work for. At Barnacles teams could also be rewarded according to measurements such as customer satisfaction, customer complaints and the results of future 'mystery shopper' exercises. In short, smart and thoughtful use of reward initiatives should be able to help Barnacles change in the ways it needs to, while also maintaining high levels of commitment. It will also reduce the appeal of Peacock Hall and help keep staff turnover at low levels during the hoped-for transformation.

Section B

Question A1

Learning outcome 1

Question A2 proved a more popular choice overall, but this question was nonetheless attempted by a good number of candidates, most of whom answered it pretty effectively.

The CIPD's report identifies numerous potential advantages from an employer's perspective. Candidates were not expected to cite all of these, but the wider the range that they were able to identify, the higher the mark. The key areas are voice/participation/involvement, corporate communications/feedback, promoting distributional leadership, HRD /knowledge-sharing/knowledge creation, information sharing/agility/faster and better

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

customer service, developing a sense of shared purpose/pride, employer branding, promoting change/innovation, trust/dialogue, and establishing a more open and egalitarian culture. Some of these also apply to employees because they promote job satisfaction and help to create positive engagement. In addition employees benefit by being able to communicate their views and ideas to management, through an enhanced work-based social life, HRD opportunities and a more enriched working life.

Answers were particularly strong when it came to the drawbacks. The possible dangers relate to trolling/personal abuse etc, the possibility that honest internal communications leak outside and damage the organisation's reputation, the possibility that employees won't use it or trust it and that establishing it is thus an expensive waste of time and money. The best way of minimising these is for HR to take on a 'curating role' (that is, deleting offensive material), that rules on netiquette are established and enforced (for example, no anonymity), that employees are actively involved in the ongoing development of the network, that it is has a purely social function as well as a work one, that management demonstrably listen and act when issues are raised by employees and that separate 'gated' and non-gated sections are set up so that external users (customers, would-be employees etc) can be part of the dialogue.

Question A2

Learning Outcome 1

When marking past papers we have noticed how very keen a good proportion of candidates always seem to be to write about the AMO model, so it made sense to focus a question on that subject specifically. It proved a popular choice, only a small minority of candidates proving unable to explain what AMO stood for and how the model can help guide the development of HR practice.

The black box studies are the most prominent and widely cited UK-based academic research studies in HRM of the past twenty years. They were sponsored by CIPD and students should thus be familiar with them. This was overwhelmingly the case. Sometimes, however, weaker candidates struggled to explain why the model had proved to be so influential and enduring, in some cases this part of the question simply being ignored altogether.

AMO stands for ability, motivation and opportunity. Like many of the more influential business models it is very simple and straightforward. The research finding was that when all three of these conditions are present individual and team performance is likely to improve. Where one is weak or is missing, it is very difficult for an organisation to maximise a team's performance. All are thus necessary if sustained discretionary effort is to occur in organisations. Employees must have the ability to perform well and the motivation to do so, while organisations must ensure that they are given the opportunity to perform well. The model is influential partly because of the compelling evidence the researchers provided to support their findings. However, it also makes total sense and is thus readily accepted and explained. It is also easy to use as a tool of evaluation and as the basis for improving both individual and team performance in an organisation.

Students answered part two in a variety of ways. It was phrased so that those who work for organisations that largely meet the requirements of AMO could answer it just as effectively

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

as those who don't. The key to a strong answer was the inclusion of both HRM and HRD initiatives in the analysis. Candidates were also required to justify the points they made in an effective and compelling way. Some were able to meet these requirements more effectively than others.

Question B3

Learning Outcome 3

In retrospect this question was probably a little too challenging and focused too much on a particular stream of contemporary research. Few answered it and many of those who did struggled to write a really compelling answer that focused on the notion of 'followership.'

The idea behind this question is deceptively simple if sometimes hard to articulate simply. It forms a major feature in contemporary thinking about leadership and improving leadership effectiveness. It has also underpinned some recent CIPD research studies and is flagged in the CIPD's main fact sheet on leadership. Essentially the argument is that however strong an individual's leadership credentials as conventionally defined (decisive, energetic, articulate, good judgement, thick-skinned, experienced etc) unless a good relationship is established and then maintained between the leader and his/her followers, there cannot be effective leadership. Maintaining and nurturing this relationship thus constitutes a process which needs to be managed and which can be characterised as a significant organisational capability. Candidates who attempted this question sometimes recognised the followership perspective as being a helpful contribution to our understanding of how to improve leadership in organisations, but in many cases they demonstrated only a hazy appreciation of the underpinning idea, writing in more general terms about the need for leader figures to engage and involve their people.

Answers to part two varied greatly depending on the student's own organisation and the nature of its leadership. In order to gain high marks however, focus had to be placed on HR interventions (of both a management and developmental nature) which are aimed at improving trust/respect/affection between leaders and followers. It is partly about helping followers to understand their role and partly about nurturing the relationship on an ongoing basis. Two-way communication is important here as are the creation of opportunities for the closeness of relationships to be enhanced. Employee involvement is central as are leadership development interventions aimed at helping leaders to appreciate their role in relationship building.

Question B4

Learning Outcome 3

This question was attempted by the vast majority of candidates and was generally answered well. It was essentially about poor first line management in the UK when seen from an HRM perspective - a subject that students have shown an inclination to write well about when we have included it on past papers. The major reasons for this continued weakness identified in the research are (i) shortage of time and the need always to prioritise short-term, technical objectives/customer requirements, hence leaving insufficient time or energy for longer-term people-focused interventions; (ii) poor selection decisions when appointing first line managers that involve subordinating people skills to technical ones; (iii)

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

lack of training in effective people management/leadership (iv) inadequate incentives provided/no incentives provided in reward or performance management systems to help direct attention towards the people leading role; and (v) a tendency for line managers to focus on their own career development/priorities rather than on those who work for them. The consequences are low levels of engagement, poorer long-term performance, higher staff turnover, low trust and generally a failure to make the most of the human capital that the organisation has at its disposal. These kinds of points were well-made by most who answered this, a good number making additional points about the particular challenges brought by developments in the business environment in recent years.

Part two asked for suggestions as to ways forward, but did so by requiring students to reflect on their own experience and observations when doing so. Strong answers thus illustrated general points with personal examples or observations. Candidates identified a range of potential HRM and HRD interventions which address each (or at least some) of the five points set out above. Management development is key here, especially when people are first appointed to supervisory roles. Interventions of this kind will focus on time management and the basics of sound leadership. There are also organisational changes that can be made as far as HR is concerned (for example, recruitment and selection systems, reward systems, performance management systems etc). The research also sees this as a problem that runs right up organisations. First line managers are themselves poorly led by their supervisors, who in turn have the same problem. So interventions aimed higher up can also have a role to play here.

Question C5

Learning Outcome 5

It was chosen by a large majority of candidates, most of whom wrote competent and thoughtfully about the issues it raised.

The relative merits of elitist, 'A player' or 'Queen Bee' talent management strategies have formed the basis of prominent recent debates in HRM and HRD. Students should, however, have been able to answer this question effectively even if they were unfamiliar with the points made by some of the more high profile participants in the debate.

The advantages associated with the elitist approach are widely advanced, being based essentially on the view that in most organisations it is possible to identify people of outstanding talent who, unlike most employees, have the capacity 'to make a real difference'. These are people who competitors would like to headhunt. They often have a very keen sense of their worth and will move on if they perceive that their careers will be better boosted elsewhere. There is therefore a strong business case for targeting them and their needs when allocating resources (HRD, reward, succession planning etc). The disadvantage of this approach is that it is elitist and thus tends to de-motivate those who contribute a lot but are not put on the same fast track – thus, disengaging and de-motivating average, solid people who all organisations rely on to deliver their objectives. A more distributed approach to talent management, however, may not be so effective in terms of the organisation's long-term development. The strongest candidates were aware of contributions to the debate which argue in favour of focusing talent management resources on 'A roles' rather than on 'A players' and which encourage competition among staff for promotion into those roles.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

Part 2 was answered in many different ways depending on the industry, the student's own experiences/observations and the approach that organisation in question currently takes. What mattered as far as marks were concerned is that the question was answered directly and that a compelling justification was advanced to back up the argument that had been developed. In practice most managed this extremely well, drawing on examples from their organisations and generally making a strong case either way.

Question C6

Learning Outcome 5

It was only attempted by a relatively small proportion of the candidates.

The focus of both parts of this question was on the candidates' personal experiences and observations, and on their own organisations, rather than the published literature on equality and diversity. That said, the strongest answers were very much informed by theory and by the debates that the students had read about. The best answers discussed matters such as stereotyping, prejudice, similarity attraction, social expectations and the other major causes of inequality at work even if these terms are not used. What mattered was that any points of a general kind were illustrated with original examples.

Part 2 could be answered in many ways depending on the current state of equality and diversity in the student's own organisation. The key points they tended to make when it came to the case related to maximising return on investment, making use of all talent and reputation building both in product and labour markets, and more generally.

Question D7

Learning Outcome 6

Despite this not being a particularly well-researched field, a good majority of candidates attempted it, taking advantage of the scope provided for them to develop their own arguments and to base them on their own observations. A number of good, distinct points were made in answer to part 1. First there was the financial explanation, students perceiving that they will be able to earn more by pursuing a career in a large private sector corporation (particularly in finance or business services) than in local government or the NHS. They are also likely to start on a considerably higher salary. Secondly, private sector corporations tend to invest a great deal more in graduate recruitment, having a prominent presence at careers fairs, undertaking campus visits and maintaining high-spec websites. They are also more innovative in their approaches. Students are also often attracted by international opportunities and working with cutting-edge technologies which public sector bodies are less able to offer. They also generally have the impression that individual talent will be recognised and promoted more rapidly in the private sector. Fashion may also play a part, private sector employment being perceived to be more exciting and glamorous, while being less inflexible and bureaucratic. A number of candidates made a good case for this being a temporary recession-related issue for public sector employers, arguing that over time reputation for providing a good career will return.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

In the main answers to part two focused on improving graduate recruitment processes and on the adoption by the public sector of employer branding-type approaches aimed at publicising the attractions of their career opportunities more effectively. Job security, the opportunity to undertake socially useful work, task variety, career development opportunities etc are all aspects of public sector careers that can form the basis of these initiatives. It is also important that the public sector improves the way it communicates with would-be graduate recruits - smarter, more interactive web-sites, internships, campus visits etc. All these points were made and often illustrated effectively with examples.

Question D8

Learning 6

This was a straightforward question for anyone who had studied the basics of international HRM, and it proved a popular choice. The best answers to both parts were illustrated with examples, but students could achieve a pass mark without doing so, drawing instead on published theories, models and research results in justifying their points.

The preference for standardisation is partly about operating efficiency – that is, one IT system, one training programme, one set of staff rules etc. It is also often a question of enhancing the capacity of corporate HQ to exercise control and for exporting internationally approaches that have been proven to work effectively in the organisation's 'home operations'. It makes communication more straightforward if everyone has the same reference points as well as helping to ensure fairness in the way that everyone is treated across the world. This promotes motivation, engagement and retention. This case was well-made and well-understood by a majority of candidates.

The problems arise because the standard system may often either be unsuited or sub-optimal when introduced in some locations. The literature on IHRM makes this very clear. Cultural diversity continues to persist strongly despite globalisation, meaning that people's expectations about the way that they will be managed vary very considerably from country to country. Institutional diversity is also highly relevant here. Taxation systems, legal systems, training systems etc vary greatly across the globe, as does the position of trade unions and the way in which employment relations is organised. The result is a need on the part of international organisations to adopt the mantra 'think global, act local' when designing HR systems. The same strategic HR objectives can be pursued internationally, but how these are met has to vary from country to country. Again, these points were generally made pretty effectively and illustrated with examples.

Question E9

Learning Outcome 7

As expected this question attracted plenty of answers, most of which were soundly argued. It is challenging for organisations to promote environmental sustainability for a number of reasons. First there are often considerable up-front costs which are hard to justify from a business perspective when competition is intensifying, profit margins are tight and operating budgets are being cut. Secondly, there may be longer-term cost implications in terms of operating efficiency and service/product quality. These effects are sometimes indirect, but nonetheless very real when seen from a commercial perspective. Where financial benefits are achievable, it may be some years before they are realised to any great extent.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

Resistance to change among employees is also an issue. Cultural/behavioural change is challenging to engineer in all circumstances. Employees are often cynical about sustainability programmes when they perceive them to be as much about reducing costs as seriously promoting an environmental agenda. Client resistance is also often an issue, especially when prices and service reliability are affected by efforts to move towards greater sustainability. Strong answers made these points and illustrated them with examples to demonstrate understanding. Some of the weaker answers tended to be focused on corporate social responsibility (CSR) more generally and hence only partially answered the question we actually asked.

Part two answers inevitably varied greatly depending on the current state of play re sustainability in their own organisations. The best answers were creative when discussing the potential HR contribution, focusing for example on the potential role of technologies (video-conferencing, e-learning, paperless communication etc) and flexible working initiatives (for example, home-working, flexi-time) in helping organisations to achieve environmentally sustainable objectives. Some weaker answers simply described what their organisations currently did; this was not what the question was asking for.

Question E10

Learning Outcome 7

In the past when questions have been asked on this paper about improving business ethics in organisations, students have shown considerable interest in whistleblowing and have often recommended the introduction of formal policies and procedures of this kind. This question extended the field to health and safety, while also asking them to think more deeply about the practicalities. A substantial minority of candidates attempted it, with mixed results.

The key to scoring high marks in answering the first question was to create a procedure which obviates the need for people to take their concerns outside the organisation by permitting internal resolution wherever possible. This needs to be backed up with policies which either actively encourage people to raise their concerns or which at least try to create conditions in which they are not discouraged from doing so. There is also a need to protect against the use of whistleblowing procedures by people who are pursuing a personal agenda or playing politics rather than raising genuine concerns. This is a difficult balance to strike, and most were unclear about its importance.

The business case is best made with reference to the very bad publicity and reputational damage that corporations and their senior managers suffer when scandals hit the newspapers or when preventable tragedies occur - there are many high profile recent examples that can be drawn on (BP, horsemeat in foods, North Staffs hospitals, News of the World, BBC entertainers etc). What mattered, as always, is that a good, coherent case was made and was justified convincingly.

Conclusions

Generally this was a strong batch of papers which it was enjoyable to mark. As always the students at some centres excelled much more than those at others, but the overall pass

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

mark was pleasing to see when all the final marking and moderation had been completed. The spread of marks was broadly in line with those achieved by most recent cohorts, so there is little really for me to add here that I have not said before in examiner's reports. It remains the case that candidates will pass and score high marks when they are able to provide us with answers which comprise a direct, full and well-informed response to the questions on the paper.

Stephen Taylor

Chief examiner