

CANDIDATE DETAILS

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Membership number	
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CIPD Advanced Level Examinations

Human Resource Management in Context

January 2022 - Examiners Report

Date: 25 January 2022

Time: 09.50-14.00

- This exam starts at 09.50 (UK time) and finishes at 14.00 (UK time)
- The first 10 minutes of this exam is intended for reading and question planning
- Once complete, you must save this file with your Candidate Number as the file name and send to exams@cipd.co.uk by no later than 14.15 (UK time)
- You should only type in the answer boxes provided, do not make any changes to the exam question or other parts of the paper.

A note from your Chief Examiner:

1. Look carefully at each question and spend some time identifying exactly what is required.
2. Set out some brief notes that provide you with a structure for your answer.
3. Keep referring back to these notes and to the question(s) as you write your answer.
4. After writing each answer, check carefully that every part, both within and between the question(s) is answered.

RULES OF EXAMINATION

By submitting your work for marking you are agreeing to the below conditions

- Answer **all** of Section A.
- Answer **five** questions in Section B (**one** per subsection A to E).
- Read each question carefully before answering.

Information

- 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) **and/or**
- You achieve less than 40% in either Section A or Section B **and/or**
- You achieve less than 50% overall.

In accordance with the [CIPD Plagiarism Policy for Online Remote Examinations](#) you must:

- not have any assistance with the exam from friends, family, centre staff or any other person(s).
- not allow friends, family or any other person(s) to sit the exam in your place
- not have access to or use unauthorised materials such as coursebooks, revision booklets, notes or pre-prepared templates during the exam.
- not use the internet (other than for sitting the exam), email or equipment during the exam. This includes potential technological/web enabled sources of information such as an iPod, a mobile phone, a MP3/4 player or similar device, a smartwatch or a wristwatch which has a data storage device.
- not be involved in any unfair or dishonest practice during the exam.

If any of these conditions are not met during the exam or are later found to be breached, an investigation will take place and could result in possible **disqualification**.

The only material you are allowed to bring to the exam is a printed copy of the case study provided it is free of notes.

You may only use your phone or email in order to contact CIPD if you experience any issues during the examination.

January 2022 - 7HRC Examiners Report

Introduction

This report reviews the January 2022 sitting of the Human Resource Management in Context advanced level examination of the CIPD.

On this occasion, 179 candidates sat the written examination. The overall pass mark was 56% which is lower in comparison with most recent cohorts and reflect a bigger number of re-sit candidates taking the paper. The proportion of distinctions is slightly lower than in the last examination, the proportions of merits are lower and passes are the same. The proportion of marginal fails fell; however, the largest difference is in the number in the fail category which is considerably higher. A breakdown of grades compared with results from the last examination is shown below.

January 2022		
Grade	Number	Percentage of total (to 1 decimal point)
Distinction	3	1.7
Merit	13	7.3
Pass	83	46.3
Marginal fail	17	9.5
Fail	63	35.2
Total	179	100.0

The examination consists of two sections, a seen case study in Section A and ten short answer questions in Section B, where candidates are required to attempt five questions, which are divided into five sub-sections. All the learning outcomes of the unit were assessed on the examination paper.

In addition to demonstrating knowledge and understanding in this examination, successful candidates are expected to match the CIPD vision of the HR professional as a business partner and a thinking performer who can deliver day-to-day operational requirements and reflect on current procedures, systems and contexts, and be able to contribute to continuous improvement and change initiatives.

Candidates are expected to achieve M-level performance in the examination, drawing upon evidence-based argument, critical thinking and broad understanding of their field of study, not only within their own organisation and sector, but also across a reasonable spectrum of other organisations and sectors.

Feedback on examination results

This report summarises the results from the open-book examination which candidates took at their homes. As with previous recent sittings they were instructed at the beginning of the examination paper that they must undertake the examination following the '***CIPD Plagiarism Policy for Online Remote Examinations,***'

As with previous examinations the majority of candidates respected these instructions however a small number of papers were referred for investigation.

SECTION A

This is the case study that was released to you 4 weeks ago. You can read below and also open in a web browser using the link below to refer to when answering your questions:

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/learn/training/pre-2021-qualifications/advanced-exam-info/case-studies>

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.

PRIME-CHOCOLATE

The chocolate and confectionary industry is a global business, consisting of several multinational companies and thousands of smaller producers, known as artisan/micro or regional manufacturers, depending on size and region.

In the chocolate industry, manufacturers tend to own and control the shops and have sole rights to sell in outlets such as department stores and supermarkets. Once this right is approved, the product market can be controlled, with prices fixed by the manufacturer. This also has the effect of creating a barrier to rival manufacturers.

Government legislation was introduced in 2010 to create greater access for medium-sized businesses to enter the industry by the monopolies commission ruling against contracts giving sole rights to sell. It also created opportunities for independent manufacturers to enter the market, to compete with the major manufacturers for sales to the emerging confectionary chains. This was particularly helpful to the regional manufacturer, whilst artisan manufacturers tended to work on independent distribution, and tended to concentrate on one or two local areas.

Prime Chocolate started out in 2014 as an artisan micro business. It was a two-person venture, established because both individuals had a love of quality chocolate and an entrepreneurial spirit. They tended to treat it as a hobby. As the demand for artisan chocolate increased, they resigned from their jobs and set about a plan to, at least, keep abreast with small business competition and, potentially, sell to supermarkets. Their business went through a slow growth period as they learned more about the industry, the competition, and customer preferences.

Prime Chocolate now has a workforce of two hundred and twenty-five staff. It is steadily following its plans to increase production significantly, so that it can compete with other small, but developing, manufacturers. This is a very ambitious plan, but one that has been achieved by some other artisan/micro manufacturers since 2010.

The following is a presentation by the Director of HR and Finance:

"I joined as Director of HR and Finance when the company had only thirty employees. Now, we have around two hundred and fifty. I find my job challenging - balancing HR and finance responsibilities. But, I also find it rewarding, and I wouldn't want it any other way.

Traditionally, we attracted new employees, because of the appeal of artisan chocolate, and working in a small organisation with a family approach to the treatment of its employees. Hiring for passion can go a long way, but, sometimes, we need people with experience, or even inexperience, who we can train up to fit the particular needs of our business. I think we've seen every type of situation both work and fail. It's really specific to the job function and the dynamics. Manufacturing is inherently tough, especially in production, and keeping up morale is important to us.

As we've grown and evolved, what's been amazing is that it's always the employees who start to make the company strong and allow us to build it. Without all of our wonderful employees, we wouldn't be able to continue to make this chocolate and be hands-on when we need to, and also hands-off where we need to be.

We have talented employees who are committed to the driving the mission of the business. They play a crucial part in keeping all aspects of the business aligned and progressing according to plan.

When I started out, my main focus was on day-to-day matters. As the business grew, I became more focused on setting up systems and processes and creating long-term plans. In particular, I had to build a strong Finance team, to take responsibility for the different aspect of running a viable and successful business. I now have three Finance and three HR employees. Together they are a strong team, as they support each other and cross-over between functions, to develop a clear business orientation. As the person who understands legal matters relating to both finance and employment, I direct both functions and produce the accounts to the rest of the Board. In particular, I concentrate on strategic issues and discuss transfer of assets between financial functions, to support the on-going viability of the business. This gives me the added advantage of presenting the contribution that HR is making, particularly when some major issues will impact on our HR plan.

As both Finance and HR Director, the combination of these gives me more authority and responsibility. It makes me take a very business-like approach when handling HR. I found aspects of HR particularly challenging at the beginning; for example, I recognised the need to keep employees committed and motivated but found it hard to quantify some HR activity.

I found that 'balancing the books' had to take account of hidden benefits, if we were to grow the business organically. I also found that a close relationship with the Marketing and Legal functions helped to recognise the benefits and challenges that are out there in the external environment.

On the political front, there can be National Living Wage increases affecting salaries and wages, and budget increases in duty on imports and increases in the duty or taxes on chocolate.

Economically, we are concerned about the current national downturn in disposable income. We are also seeing more cut-price offers from major manufacturers. We need to take quite aggressive tactics, to gain entry to the medium-sized supermarkets, as there is strong competition from other small manufacturers.

The sale of our chocolate through supermarkets will give us opportunities for growth. This will impact production and sales, with knock-on effects for the rest of the business. This is when my dual role will be particularly effective, as I drive HR strategy, to make a significant contribution to the finance of the business.

Socially, we are benefitting from the increased popularity of localised venues for food and drink fares, local annual shows and weekly markets promoting artisan products. Perhaps, our strongest social impact comes from having a strong core of loyal customers, who are passionate advocates of artisan chocolate.

We are able to widen our appeal, as an interest in street markets is regularly promoted via multi-media, websites, blogs, and social networking. In particular, we find that social networking operates as a source of product promotion for us. So far, our venture into online selling is proving successful, particularly with events organisations hosting weddings and birthdays.

Environmentally, we benefit from developing a strong brand image, focussing on supporting local economies and caring about our impact on both our local and country-wide environment. We operate efficiently through recycling; and minimising waste is built into our manufacturing process. Our particular strength is that we have been awarded Fair Trade status, including not using palm oil in any of our products.

Our main legal challenge is when there are changes to international trading rules as most of our chocolate beans come from the Ivory coast and Ghana. We also monitor other legislation, particularly on Food and Hygiene, Health and Safety and Employment.

The treatment of our staff is based on caring for their welfare and recognising and rewarding their contribution to the business. We promote chocolate and sweet foods in moderation. We support local charities.

Whilst the above points have to be taken into account on an on-going basis, we also have to be agile when major, unexpected events pose challenges to our business. The biggest of these has been COVID-19 and government actions, in response.

Please note that the comments and mark section are for CIPD use only.

SECTION A

It is recommended you spend an equal amount of your time on each of the tasks.

Learning Outcome 3: How organisational and HR strategies are shaped by and developed in response to internal and environmental factors.

Learning Outcome 4: The market and competitive environments of organisations and how organisational leaders and the HR function respond to them.

In our industry, there was a sharp decline in demand, from the forced closure of smaller shops and markets from March 2020. All confectioners, Prime Chocolate included, had to adapt, and realign the business strategies, to support sales. Online chocolate sales increased by 55% in April 2020. Like many other small and independent manufacturers, our realigned strategy put the focus on offering online and delivery services with a minimum order, to ensure it would be cost-effective. We successfully concentrated our marketing and sales on chocolate through small to medium-sized shops. Our foray into supermarkets was less successful, because of the advantages of the major manufacturers in pricing, production, and distribution. We will maintain our online service and incorporate it into our strategy of growth and entry to the medium-sized supermarkets. This means that marketing and sales are under pressure, and we need to keep generating money to ensure this growth strategy will pay off.”

Question 1

Critically analyse the benefits and challenges of combining the roles in Finance and Human Resources (HR) into a single Director level position, in relation to:

i. The case study organisation (Prime Chocolate)

AND

ii. The wider HR profession.

Chief Examiner comments on Question 1

The first part of this question was generally well answered with most candidates using material in the case study well in their analysis. Good answers focused on material presented in the Director of HR and Finance presentation in the case study text to form the basis of their answers together with other points about the organisation that make important statements in terms of whether the combined roles may provide benefits or result in challenges that would be helpful or unhelpful to the business. They include; size of business, future plans for it and history of HR and Finance. Weaker answers failed to focus on the need to critically analyse the benefits and challenges of combining roles.

The second part of the question was not as well answered. Benefits and challenges to the wider HR profession seemed to provide more of a challenge. Practitioners in the wider HR profession may well consider this from a professional point of view in terms of facilitating the role and function of HR and how collaboration (or a joint position on the Board) is likely to improve organisational performance and the credibility of the function. Power and influence at Board level may well be a driving force. A joint single Director position may be challenging given the knowledge and skills required from two rather different approaches adopted by the two professions.

Good answers considered the people and financial benefits arising from collaboration and demonstrated benefits to staff as well as shareholders and also identified the challenges of performing two roles requiring different skill sets.

Few candidates used research evidence to support their analysis such as the themes presented in the work undertaken by CIPD with CIMA that is based on collaboration between the professions. The aim is to highlight the importance of the two professions working together in any organisation. Initiatives undertaken at national level include research into big data, human capital measurement and gearing CPD to an appreciation of both professions. Overall the people and financial benefits arising from collaboration will ensure benefits to staff as well as shareholders. (Peter Cheese and Charles Tilley head up this initiative). Another complementary approach is presented by Victor Milan who suggests that HR and finance ability to work together and understand each other's role can be critical to any organisation. He argues that the two departments should fit in closely with the organisations purpose. Both departments must understand what the other does and what overlap in duties personnel and resources exist between the two and how it can be best capitalised upon.

Question 2

Analyse the internal factors that can contribute to the future success of Prime Chocolate and the challenges of harnessing these to benefit the organisation.

Chief Examiner comments on Question 2

This seemed to be a straight forward question that would relate closely to pre-examination preparation of the case study material however there were a number of disappointing answers to this question. A number of those better prepared used a SWOT analysis and this helped them structure their answer. The case study lists a number of strengths and weaknesses and better answers used these to examine how these could be developed, or in the case of weaknesses, minimised or eliminated when considering how to ensure the future success of the organisation. Better answers used analysis well to construct a persuasive argument that set out how best to contribute to the future success of Prime Chocolate whilst weaker answers failed to consider the challenges of harnessing these internal factors or how they related to the future success of the organisation.

Question 3

Critically evaluate ways in which Prime-Chocolate can positively influence the impact of the external factors on its business.

Chief Examiner comments on Question 3

In general this question was answered well. Candidates that prepared a STEEPLE analysis in their examination preparation were off to a good start when answering this Task with most identifying external factors likely to impact on the business.

Good answers raised interesting issues about both the impact of these factors and how to influence them given the context of Prime Chocolate's desire for growth. These answers went on to provide examples of interventions that could benefit the organisation. (e.g. Demonstrating an environmentally responsible brand image to meet potential customer needs, lobbying external support groups to gain competitive advantage). Weaker answers tended to cut and paste a SWOT or STEEPLE analysis without adequately evaluating ways of positively influencing the impact of external factors on the business.

SECTION B

Answer **FIVE** questions in this section, **ONE** per subsection A to E.

For example, you need to answer either:

A1 OR A2

B3 OR B4

C5 OR C6

D7 OR D8

E9 OR E10

DO NOT ANSWER BOTH QUESTIONS IN EACH SUBSECTION

SECTION B

Please only answer A1 OR A2.

A1

Learning Outcome 1: Understand, analyse, and critically evaluate contemporary organisations and their principal environments.

According to Kelleher (2021), many employees have experienced working exclusively remotely during lockdown, fewer have experienced a mixed model ('hybrid') of both remote and office-based working. Kelleher argues: "In particular, it is important that line managers are given support to help them in setting up new working arrangements with their teams, and that they think carefully about how communication and co-ordination in the team will work, when some people are in the workplace, while others are working remotely."

Identify and critically review the changes and challenges for line managers managing a new 'hybrid working' arrangement.

AND

What support can HR give to line managers who face this new arrangement?

Chief Examiner comments on Question A1

Most candidates chose to answer this question and handled the first part of the question well. Many appear to be familiar with the problems faced by line managers managing a hybrid working situation and were guided by some of the issues mentioned in the rubric.

Good answers provided knowledge of the day-to-day activity of line managers and discussed the issue of control as well as motivation, communication and team-working. Changes discussed tend to relate to the context of the employing organisation but most focused on work itself and support for workers.

A number of weak answers failed to consider that hybrid working required attendance at work as well as home working and therefore neglected to consider changes and challenges for managers associated with combining part time return to work and home working.

Not as well answered overall, however, there were a number of good answers to this part of the question. Good answers raised HR concerns associated with surveillance of workers and went on to discuss whether/how those working from home need to be overseen in terms of working time and productivity and likely concerns from staff associated with a return to work. Weak answers tended to be brief concentrating on training and failing to discuss how HR can support a plan to establish a regular pattern of home and work-

based working. For example facilitate meetings to ensure everyone is involved and considering the need for new HR policies (e.g., travel to work; health and safety).

SECTION B

Please only answer A1 OR A2.

A2

Learning Outcome 1: Understand, analyse, and critically evaluate contemporary organisations and their principal environments.

In the search for improved profit and performance your organisation has announced the closure of forty of its sixty High Street retail outlets in order to concentrate more selling of selling its merchandise on-line through a single warehouse.

Critically review the support that HR can give to the staff currently employed in the High Street stores that are closing.

AND

Critically analyse how the closure decision will affect staff in the remaining stores and what HR can do in response.

Chief Examiner comments on Question A2

There is a possible overlap with psychological, legal and economic considerations with the second part of the question and this has been properly considered by the examining team and credit given when marking this question.

This was less popular than question A1. Better answers considered psychological issues such as motivation and fear of the unknown linking with change theory and the need to provide workers with reassurance about their future. The displaced group of workers will need reassurances about their future. Discussion about changes in the structure of the business and any realignment of the structures, processes and boundaries were not generally considered in weaker answers. The best answers considered legal and economic factors and how HR is required to conform to details of employment legislation and ensure that employees are aware of their rights and obligations. HR can assist and advise on possible redeployment and provide help and advice on employment opportunities.

As indicated above those leaving will require help and support from HR. Good answers discussed mental health issues and how HR could support employees. Whilst motivation is likely to be included, better answers considered the short-term adverse impact these workers could have on the business and its reputation. In some cases dysfunctional behaviour such as sabotage was mentioned. Good answers included some change management theory. Discussion about the changing nature of work through technology also gained credit.

Weaker answers focussed mainly on motivational problems and possible insecurity facing staff without indicating clearly what HR can do in response other than counselling.

SECTION B

Please only answer B3 OR B4.

B3

Learning Outcome 2: The managerial and business environment within which HR professionals work.

You receive the following email from a colleague:

“I read a recent report, which found that some organisations with low paid workers were successfully incentivising their employees with annual bonuses of around £1,000. I thought that, in the workplace, job satisfaction, reward and recognition was all about developing a positive psychological contract. So, should we treat the psychological contract as a passing fashion? Just paying a flat bonus will be much less work for us.”

Critically analyse the challenges and benefits of developing a positive psychological contract in a low wage work environment, and determine/discuss whether the ‘flat bonus’ truly will be ‘much less work’ for HR.

Draw upon reputable publications and research to support your answer.

Chief Examiner comments on Question B3

This was a popular question but not as well answered as expected. Weaker answers provided evidence of knowledge and understanding of the psychological contract but seemed reluctant to critically examine the challenges and benefits of developing a PC in a low wage work environment or relating to the flat bonus statement and the implication that this alternative would be welcomed by HR as it would create ‘*much less work*’..

Good candidates provided support to their arguments from appropriate literature and discussed whether those in low paid jobs felt that the PC had been broken by employers. Implementing flat bonus and impact on different kinds of workers was considered in good answers but few discussed whether the flat bonus scheme would be less work for HR.

SECTION B

Please only answer B3 OR B4.

B4

Learning Outcome 2: The managerial and business environment within which HR professionals work.

During the pandemic, unemployment increased, working from home and/or working flexible hours gained popularity and economies faltered, as the costs of the pandemic mounted. Employers responded in different ways, including:

- i. 'Fire and rehire' on less favourable terms
- ii. Speeding-up the use of technology

Critically evaluate the HR challenges for implementing each of the above.

Draw upon reputable publications and research to support your answer.

Chief Examiner comments on Question B4

This question was not as popular as A3 however there were several good answers but also many poor attempts. Good answers looked at the potential impact of putting these two responses together. In the first part of the question candidates are required to consider the implications of a fire and rehire strategy. Good answers demonstrated the challenges presented to HR when terminating contracts of employment and offering new contracts on less favourable terms. Knowledge and understanding of correct procedures to effect the change and how best to cope with reactions of staff were common themes in these answers sometimes referring to the psychological contract and ethical issues associated with this practice. Weak answers focussed on HR challenges dealing with lack of motivation without critically evaluating the implementation processes required. HR challenges when implementing speeding-up the use of technology follows the same pattern with fear of the unknown and the management of change central to good arguments. Reference to published work is not evident in weak answers even though this was an open book examination.

SECTION B

Please only answer C5 OR C6.

C5

Learning outcome 5: Globalization and international forces and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR practices.

A fellow student, on a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) programme, says to her seminar group: “I’ve been reading a United Nations Conference report about the adverse world-wide impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism. Why is tourism regarded as particularly important when I read about globalisation?”

How will you respond?

AND

Critically analyse why understanding the subject of globalisation is important for HR professionals.

Use research and reputable published reports to support both your answers.

Chief Examiner comments on Question C5

This was not a popular question and knowledge and understanding of this topic was extremely variable. Weak answers tended to discuss globalisation without considering the impact of COVID19 restrictions on tourism or its importance when reading about globalisation. Good answers recognised that tourism involves the movement of people around the globe, and the impact of global monetary impact of tourism. Few answers mentioned internationalism or established clear links to tourism to explain its contribution to the growth of globalisation. Good answers also considered the political and economic impact of tourism on the distribution of wealth.

This part of the question proved to be challenging to most candidates and few candidates scored well in this part of the question. Weaker answers paid little attention to macro-economic factors other than those facing airline industries. Better answers appreciated that HR professionals should have some understanding of all the different contexts where there is a need for HR. Several better answers recognised that the domestic market is influenced by the global market. Globalisation impacts upon supply and demand, including labour. In particular HR needs to understand what effects there can be and how HR can be pro-active to create competitive advantage for its organisation. Few candidates considered the factors that influence globalisation and the implications for HR or provide practical examples or provide relevant research or publications to illustrate arguments.

SECTION B

Please only answer C5 OR C6.

C6

Learning outcome 5: Globalization and international forces and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR practices.

You and a fellow HR Assistant have joined a group discussing the implications of globalism. The group claim “the movement of labour between countries has had a positive effect on some countries and a negative effect on others. There are winners and losers”.

Critically evaluate what attracts HR to recruit labour from developing countries and what negative and positive effects this can have on these countries.

Draw upon reputable publications, and research to support your answer.

Chief Examiner comments on Question C6

This question was more popular than question 5. Unfortunately some candidates did not consider the requirement set out in the stem to consider “*the movement of labour between countries*”

The question then requires a “*critical evaluation of what attracts HR to recruit labour from developing countries and what negative and positive effects this can have on these countries*”.

A few good answers recognised the significance of the stem and provided a sound evaluation with examples of recruitment from a developing country to the UK and considered winners and losers in terms of social, ethical and economic considerations. Critical evaluation included factors such as, the free movement of labour, supply and demand for labour, labour shortage, political dynamics and HR strategy and practices. Common examples of successful HR recruitment include NHS and the care sector with reciprocal benefits described for the developing country and UK.

Those candidates that failed to consider ‘*between countries*’ tended to discuss Call Centres, offshore enterprises and MNCs locating in developing countries. Credit was given where possible to answers that evaluated what attracts HR to recruit labour from developing countries and the effects this can have on these countries but in many cases this was not sufficient to award a pass grade.

SECTION B

Please only answer **D7** OR **D8**.

D7

Learning Outcome 6: Understand, analyse, and critically evaluate globalisation and international forces and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.

According to a recent report (Pearn Kandola, 2021) The least effective action in tackling racism is to report it to HR.

Analyse why the HR profession may be perceived as ineffective in tackling workplace racism and what it can do to make it 'the place to go' when racism occurs in the workplace?

Draw upon reputable publications, and research to support your answer.

Chief Examiner comments on Question D7

This straightforward question proved to be a less popular question than question D8 and produced one or two really good answers but many were on the margin of pass/fail. Several marginal candidates argued that having reported racism to HR no appropriate action was taken and many blamed this on lack of policies and procedures or action was not taken within reasonable time frames.

Good answers approached the question by considering what the HR profession can do to improve itself. Some argued that HR can improve itself through national training initiatives that would enable HR to understand issue of racism from the perspective of the 'victim' or the witness to racist actions and/or words. Some better answers argued that HR should ensure that procedures should be examined to ensure that complaints are dealt with quick and efficiently. When considering making it the 'place to go' good answers argued that deeds not words or systems and procedures would improve the perception of HR action. Finally these better answers argued that the HR profession should encourage recruitment from minority groups into the profession as they may have greater empathy with those complaining of racism.

Once again there was little evidence of published sources to support arguments used.

SECTION B

Please only answer D7 OR D8.

D8

Learning Outcome 6: Understand, analyse, and critically evaluate globalisation and international forces and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.

Recently, a majority of the European Parliament voted in support of introducing the 'right to disconnect'. The 'right to disconnect' refers to a worker's right to be able to disengage from work and refrain from engaging in work-related communications, such as emails or other messages, during non-work hours.

Critically analyse the importance of 'disengaging from work' and what HR will need to do if it is to be effective.

Draw upon reputable publications, and research to support your answer.

Chief Examiner comments on Question D8

As indicated above this question was not as popular as D7. The topic however seemed to strike a chord with candidates who attempted this question and most indicated their support for the '*right to disconnect*'. Good answers demonstrated an awareness of recent initiatives in Europe many citing France where it has operated for around four years.

Few explored the organisational effects but most related well to effects on family and employee well-being. Better answers argued that HR's role should be around gaining acceptance and then supporting its effective implementation. Very few candidates discussed the need for policy and procedures and that there should be a strategic approach to 'right to disconnect' that builds it into a wider 'Well-being' strategy.

Little research evidence was used however one or two of the better answers referred to the UK's working time directive that stipulates that employees can't work more than 48 hours a week on average and this includes working from home. Also CIPD warned in a 2017 study that almost a third of UK workers felt they could not switch off in their personal time while working remotely and this was affecting the quality of home life and causing stress.

SECTION B

Please only answer E9 OR E10.

E9

Learning Outcome 7: Government policy and legal regulation and how these shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.

In a recent report, the Department for Work and Pensions committee warned that technological changes could have an uneven impact on different groups of workers, and it urged the government to “be more proactive in planning ahead” to avoid people being excluded from jobs or workers’ protection.

- i. Critically analyse whether Government economic policy should act to curb the impact of technology on employment. If so, what interventions might be taken?
- ii. Critically analyse whether the government should legislate to protect jobs and workers as technological advancement increases within the workplace on unemployment and workers’ protection.

Justify your answer to both parts of the question.

Chief Examiner comments on Question E9

This was perhaps the most challenging question on the examination paper and few candidates (17%) chose to attempt this question. There was little evidence that candidates considered the uneven impact of technological change on different groups of workers as suggested in the stem of the question. A small number of better answers identified types of technology likely to affect workers and discussed issues such as measuring worker activity, the use of robotics and the use of metrics. Government intervention was considered briefly by most candidates however few candidates discussed the type of Government and whether policies are interventionist or liberal free-market oriented. Macro issues such as productivity of the country, and ability to match global competition or interventions such as directing government money towards or away from technological projects or fiscal policy aimed at encouraging expansion of workforce were not discussed. Some critical analysis appeared in better answers but few provided an overall conclusion. Answers that rolled the two questions into one were given full credit for valid points made.

Weaker answers tended to ignore macro factors and focus on impact and interventions for employees and provided little justification for arguments used.

SECTION B

Please only answer E9 OR E10.

E10

Learning Outcome 7: Government policy and legal regulation and how these shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.

One anticipated consequence of recent international and domestic events is a rise in unemployment, in the retail sector. Online shopping is replacing physical shopping in stores. Jobs are still available, albeit of a different nature and requiring different skills.

Critically analyse whether government should intervene in the sector or leave it to market forces to determine the future of shopping in stores.

Chief Examiner comments on Question E10

Although the majority of candidates preferred to answer this question many failed to reach a pass standard. The answer gives candidates scope to explore the potential future of the high-street from the perspective of employment and employees however few candidates adopted this approach. Government intervention should be around whether, how far and in what ways Government can intervene, and then explore the implications of the free market. Better answers presented a balanced argument between government intervention and the ability of market forces to determine the future of shopping in stores and demonstrated sound critical analysis. Weak answers tended to focus on possible government intervention to influence online shopping supported with anecdotal examples of the convenience and cost advantages of online shopping rather than considering implications for *'jobs of a different nature requiring different skills'*.

Conclusion

The pass rate in this examination diet was 55.4%, which reflects a generally disappointing set of results. The marking team noted the following general points in assessing candidates in this written examination. These are meant to provide helpful comments and provide the opportunity for future candidates to avoid some of the errors demonstrated by those submitting weaker scripts in this national examination on this occasion.

1. To repeat a point made in a number of previous reports, this is an M-level examination, where candidates are expected to provide evidence-based answers to the questions set, drawing upon relevant research and good practice of HRM in its contexts. This means candidates are expected to read around the subject matter of the module and provide informed, justified answers to the questions set. All candidates need to supplement their studies through wider reading including academic journals, professional periodicals, and the quality press, as indicated on many occasions by the Chief examiner.
2. In the seen case study, although there was some variation Tasks 1 and 3 provided the best responses overall, with Task 2 causing more difficulty. There was evidence of some pre-planning by the better candidates many referring to SWOT and STEEPLE analysis that they prepared in advance. Application capability is a predominant weakness, as is the limited ability to provide well justified and persuasive arguments to the examining team. Weaker answers often contained arguments that were too brief and lacking analysis.
3. Even though this is a small cohort of students, evidence of candidate preparation prior to the examination resulting from the issuing of the case study in advance of the examination appears to vary across centres. Better performing centres appear to encourage discussion and information-sharing between candidates, which clearly results in better answers to the questions posed in the examination.
4. In Section B, it was noticeable that the performance of the failed candidates was extremely weak. Their capabilities were deficient in a number of areas. In the view of the examination team, this was a demanding paper and exposed those who failed to address Learning Outcome 7 adequately. As with previous examination diets, the questions covered the key subject areas included within the learning outcomes. Candidates were most challenged by questions E9 and E10, which dealt with government policy and legal regulation, a theme that is consistent in most examination diets and has caused difficulties in the past.
5. There are a number of candidates migrate to what appears to be an easier question in the paired questions in Section B, for example, one that relates to a topical issue such as hybrid working in question A1 or the psychological contract in question B3 but then do not produce an M-level response. Questions that appear to be more straightforward, which ask about more familiar subjects tend to generate quite descriptive answers. It is vitally important that when a question asks for a critical review or critical analysis, this is attempted. Either candidates are not acknowledging the need to do this, or they are not comfortable with what is required.
6. There was a wide range of quality of answers in Section B. Many candidates chose to attempt the case study first but it seems that they did not always manage their time sufficiently to allow for well-constructed answers to the questions at the end of the paper. Some candidates did not address all parts of the question and in particular in this examination seem to ignore the introduction or stem to the question that often sets the context for the answer. For example in question C6 the stem states that *'the movement of labour between countries has had a positive effect on some countries and a negative effect on others'* however a number of candidates appeared to disregard this context when answering the question.
7. More candidates passed Section A (61%) than Section B (45%). There is a marked distinction between those candidates who prepared well and have researched the sector and similar organisations when answering Section A questions as they are then able to justify their responses with evidence-based answers. Unfortunately, within some papers, evidence of pre-research was very limited. Overall some candidates continue to appear to be sitting the examination without fully appreciating what is required within an M level paper. Some candidates need a greater awareness of the requirements of what a

business case is, plus what is meant by a critical review/evaluation, rather than merely offering descriptive answers. These are skills that can be developed, if more emphasis is placed in centres on practising past questions and referring to past Chief Examiner reports for guidance.

To conclude, I would like to acknowledge and thank the team of examiners for once again contributing to the speed and quality of the assessment process on this occasion in difficult circumstances. The examiners were: Helen Bessant, Rachel Cooper, Chris Evans, Derek Adam-Smith, and John Ashcroft.

Alan Peacock (Examiner 7HRC)
on behalf of the CIPD Team of Examiners

February 2022

----- END OF EXAMINATION -----

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