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**Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development**

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### Advanced Level Qualification
# Leading, Managing and Developing People

# January 2018

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**Date:** **Thursday 25 January 2018**          **Time: 09:50 – 13:00 hrs**

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

### Instructions

- Answer **all** of Section A.
- Answer **five** questions in Section B (**one** per subsection).
- Read each question carefully before answering.
- Write clearly and legibly.

### Information

- 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.

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### 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.

### 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 Big Shop Corporation is a well-established Canadian company that develops and operates large retailing facilities. It has recently acquired two British out-of-town shopping centres called the Northborough Centre and the South Town Centre which are located around forty miles apart from one another on the outskirts of sizeable cities. Until the recent acquisitions each was owned and run independently and, to an extent, sought to compete with the other. Senior managers at The Big Shop Corporation hope that by bringing the two shopping centres together under the control of a single holding company they will be able to realise significant economies of scale, increase profits and enhance the commercial value of both properties.

Both shopping centres are of a similar size and attract similar numbers of customers each day. They each house over a hundred shops, including two large department stores and dozens of food outlets. Each has spaces for some 5000 cars and 100 coaches to park free-of-charge and is served by extensive public transport links. While several thousand people are employed to work in each centre, the vast majority work for the various retail and restaurant companies who lease space from Big Shop. The company itself only directly employs between 200 and 250 workers at each of the two sites, depending on the season. Around half of these people are employed in the Environmental Services Department as cleaners, caretakers and service yard operators. The remaining staff are employed as security officers, receptionists, events organisers, food court assistants and in the management suites at the two centres working in marketing, accounting, lease management, public relations, IT and HRM. While figures fluctuate from year to year, on average the Northborough Centre has been 11% more profitable than the South Town Centre over the past decade. However, both customer and leaseholder satisfaction rates are considerably higher at South Town.

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One of the Big Shop's more ambitious young managers, Jasper Redsheet, has been appointed to oversee HRM and HRD operations across the two shopping centres. An accountant by training, on his arrival in the UK Jasper decides to gather together financial information and other data from the management teams at Northborough and South Town before deciding what courses of action to take in order to help realise Big Shop's strategic plans.

The initial metrics that Jasper gathers for the two shopping centres consist of average figures covering the past three years. They are as follows:

Pre-tax profit generated per employee

| | |
|---|---|
| Northborough: | £72,000 |
| South Town: | £64,000 |

Voluntary staff turnover

| | |
|---|---|
| Northborough: | 35% |
| South Town: | 19% |

Recruitment costs per recruit

| | |
|---|---|
| Northborough: | £564 |
| South Town: | £425 |

Candidate acceptance rate

| | |
|---|---|
| Northborough: | 60% |
| South Town: | 85% |

Annual wage costs

| | |
|---|---|
| Northborough: | £7.8 million |
| South Town: | £8.6 million |

Average number of absence days per employee

Northborough:                        7.8

South Town:                         4.6

Training spend

Northborough:                        £161,238

South Town:                         £132,345

Number of disciplinary and grievance hearings

Northborough:                        75

South Town:                         11

Proportion of staff who are 'very satisfied' with their employment

Northborough:                        23%

South Town:                         58%

Proportion of staff employed on part-time, fixed-term or zero-hours contracts:

Northborough:                        63%

South Town:                         34%

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**You have been hired to work with Jasper Redsheet as a corporate HR advisor. Your first objectives are to help him formulate an HR strategy on behalf of the newly established holding company which now owns and operates the two shopping centres described in the case.**

**He asks you to prepare a briefing paper for him providing your initial thoughts in respect of each of the following three questions:**

**1. What are the main strengths and weaknesses as far as HRM is concerned in the Northborough and Southtown shopping centres?**

**2. What major cost savings might be achieved in terms of the HRM and HRD operations as a direct result of Big Shop's acquisition of both sites?**

**3. What should be Jasper's THREE major priorities for the coming year?**

**Drawing on research and organisational examples respond to each of these three questions, setting out and justifying your main points and observations.**

**You are able to make reasonable assumptions about staffing arrangements in the two centres provided you do not alter any of the factual information provided in the case study.**

*It is recommended that you spend roughly a third of your time on each of Questions 1, 2 and 3.*

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## 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.** In 2016 the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) published a research report on poor financial well-being. It found that debt, financial insecurity and vulnerability are major causes of employee stress and mental health problems. Moreover, these issues are likely to become more significant in the future due to increasing financial pressures on households. The authors went on to argue that it is in the interests of organisations to take steps aimed at improving their employees' financial wellbeing.

   **i.** What initiatives can organisations take to help improve the state of financial well-being among their employees?

   **AND**

   **ii**. You are asked to set out a persuasive business case for developing a range of initiatives aimed at improving financial well-being in your organisation. What would you say?  Justify your answer.

**OR**

**2.** In recent years many studies have been published across the world exploring the relationship between HRM practices and business performance. In most cases these demonstrate a significant link. Organisations which have in place a range of 'high performance work practices' or a 'bundle of best practices' tend to achieve superior business outcomes than those which do not. However, this research has been the subject of some criticism due to the inability of researchers to prove that it is sophisticated HRM that is the cause of any superior business performance.

   **i.** From an HRM perspective what would you expect to find in an organisation that was committed to high-performance working or to 'best practice HRM'?

   **AND**

   **ii.** To what extent do you agree with those who are sceptical about some of the claims made concerning the link between 'best practice HRM' and superior business outcomes?  Justify your answer.

**B**

3. Provide a full, considered and thoughtful reply to the following e-mail from your Chief Executive Officer (CEO):

   *Good afternoon. I have just returned from a meeting of local managers at which a speaker used the term 'organisational citizenship behaviour' when answering a question about employee commitment. Could you please brief me on what this term means and suggest ways in which we could promote it in our workplace?*

**OR**

4. It is sometimes said that improving people's motivation at work is much easier said than done. The answer is simple – just make the experience of working more interesting and more enjoyable. However, achieving this in practice is much harder.

   i. Drawing on your own experience of work, state how far you agree with the view that making work interesting and enjoyable is the key to motivating staff.

   **AND**

   ii. Why is it often difficult to improve the extent to which employees find their jobs to be sources of enjoyment and interest?

   **AND**

   iii. What steps could your own organisation take to make the employment experience it offers more interesting and enjoyable? Justify your answer.

**C**

**5.** When asked about the people he looks to hire to lead his businesses, the American billionaire investor Warren Buffet once said that he always looks for three qualities: integrity, intelligence and energy. He went on to say that integrity is the most important of these because people who are energetic and intelligent but lack integrity make really bad leaders.

To what extent do you agree with Mr Buffet's views on the selection of organisational leaders? Justify your answer with reference to research, examples of well-known leaders and your own observations at work.

**OR**

**6.** Over recent decades in most industrialised countries the proportion of women who undertake paid work has increased significantly. Female participation rates are now not far behind those of men and our economies have benefitted greatly as a result. It remains the case, however, that relatively few women as compared with men occupy senior leadership roles in organisations. As a result a great deal of potential leadership talent is wasted and economic performance suffers.

Drawing on published research and examples of organisation practice, answer the following two questions:

**i.** Why do men continue to dominate senior leadership positions in most organisations?

**AND**

**ii.** What steps should HR managers take to help achieve a substantially better representation of women at the top in the future?

**D**

**7**.    Over 16% of workers in the UK are now self-employed and if current trends continue, the proportion is likely to reach 25% by 2030. Similar trends are reported across the industrialised world. The big majority say that they choose to work as freelancers and there is growing demand from organisations for people with particular skill sets to work for them on a contingent basis. Increasingly the challenge facing HR departments is how effectively to recruit, retain and engage first-rate freelance staff who are able to choose who they want to work for and when they want to work.

   **i.**    Given the insecurity associated with freelancing, explain why so many professionals are now choosing to earn their living in this way.

   **AND**

   **ii.**    What advice would you give an organisation that relies heavily on teams of freelancers about how it could improve its capacity to recruit, retain and engage them?

**OR**

**8.**    John Kotter's (1995) Harvard Business Review article in which he set out a model of effective change management has become highly influential across the world. However, the model has its critics. Some argue that it is over-simplistic and that it fails to take account of the messy, politically-charged reality of much change management in organisations. Others argue that it is inappropriate for the growing number of organisations that operate in highly volatile and unpredictable business environments.

   Drawing on your own experience or published case studies, explain how far you agree with these critiques of Kotter's famous model.

**E**

9. In his recent book entitled 'Fixing Business', Digby Jones (2017) states that 'business' has developed a negative reputation in recent years, perceived by many to be an activity carried out by selfish and untrustworthy people who exploit workers and consumers alike in order to enrich themselves. He argues that these perceptions are damaging as it is businesses that create the wealth and jobs that our society relies on. Business, he suggests, needs to address these concerns quickly and effectively.

    i. Drawing on examples, explain why people have tended to become suspicious of business organisations in recent years and cynical about the motives of those who manage them.

    **AND**

    ii. What steps can HR managers take to address these concerns and help to restore the reputation of business in our society? Justify your answer.

 **OR**

10. You work for a large organisation that employs several thousand people. Last year employees and former employees brought a record number of employment tribunal claims alleging that managers had acted unlawfully towards them. Five cases were lost, while five more were settled out-of-court at a total cost of £150,000. The organisation also faced a successful criminal prosecution in respect of a breach of health and safety regulations.

    Your HR Director has decided that action needs to be taken to ensure that this does not happen again in the future. To that end a series of one-day training events is going to be organised with the title 'managing within the expectations of the law'. All managers will be obliged to attend.

    You are asked to contribute to these training events by designing and delivering a one hour briefing session on a relevant topic of your choice.

    i. What would you choose to cover in your session and why?

    **AND**

    ii. Set out three specific learning objectives for your session, together with a brief explanation about how you plan to meet each in practice. Justify your answer.

                                                              **END OF EXAMINATION**

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## Introduction

Numbering in total 380 candidates, this was the largest cohort to sit any diet of national 7LMP examinations. It was a great deal larger than we are accustomed to having sitting the January exam. As a group this cohort continued the recent run of very strong performances, achieving an overall pass rate of 74%. There were, however, within this an unusually large number of merit and distinction papers. Well over a quarter of all the papers (and almost half the passes) were graded in the upper two categories. Some at the top end were of quite a stunningly high quality; the best I have had the pleasure to mark and moderate in nearly thirty years of examining CIPD papers. By contrast, as always there remain many candidates who sit this exam despite being insufficiently prepared. Some answers are very short, almost completely miss the point of a question and too often contain only limited if any evidence that a student has either studied the subject or given extensive thought to the seen case study. Others contain relevant points, but are just too limited in terms of their scope or the effectiveness of justifications put forward to pass at M level.

The final breakdown of marks was as follows:

| January 2018 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Grade** | **Number** | **Percentage of total** (to 1 decimal point) |
| Distinction | 15 | 3.9 |
| Merit | 94 | 24.7 |
| Pass | 173 | 45.5 |
| Marginal Fail | 27 | 7.2 |
| Fail | 71 | 18.7 |
| **Total** | **380** | **100** |

On this occasion the papers were marked by Krystal Wilkinson, Andrew Hambler, Gail Swift, Graham Perkins, Penny Graham, Cecilia Ellis, Catherine Jones, Claire Tinsager, Julie Beardwell, Jon Smith, Christine Parkin-Hughes, Mary Louca and myself. I would like to extend particular thanks to Krystal Wilkinson who helped me to complete the moderation of so many papers in such a short timescale.

Detailed feedback on each question follows.

## Section A

*Learning outcomes: 5 and 6*

The case study was intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome (LO) 5 (critically discuss the aims and objectives of the HRM and HRD functions in organisations and how these are met in practice) and Learning Outcome 6 (assess the contribution made by HRM and HRD specialists in different types of organisation).

Most candidates answered all three case study questions most effectively, but there remain some common weaknesses that I would like to take the opportunity to flag again here. First, there remains a tendency among some to spend too much time simply summarising points from the case. This approach leaves too little space for analysis and original argument, let alone the provision of good evidence to signal that the candidate has understanding of relevant issues. Secondly, too often candidates choose to write out answers that they appear to have pre-prepared and which do not comprise direct answers to the questions asked on the exam paper. Thirdly, we still see a lot of examples of answers which are not sufficiently focused on the information provided in the case study, candidates preferring to write rather generically about good HR practice without significant reference to the particular organisational context. Finally, a sizeable minority of candidates simply allocate too little time to Section A, often leaving it to the end after having given good attention to each of their Section B answers. It is not uncommon to come across papers in which the whole of Section A takes up little more than a single Section B answer. This is clearly very poor exam technique given that Section A accounts for 50% of the total mark, while each Section B answer accounts for just 10%. I would therefore urge candidates sitting this paper in the future to allocate their time thoughtfully so that they are able to maximise their chances by doing equal justice to both Sections A and B.

1. What are the main strengths and weaknesses as far as HRM is concerned in the Northborough and Southtown shopping centres?

Students had some freedom here to make assumptions and hence to develop their own original arguments. In order to do well, however, they needed to discuss the central point portrayed in the metrics, namely that Southtown is very good at looking after its employees, but is less profitable than Northborough. While it can be argued that investment in HRM, HRD and human capital etc will yield long-term competitive advantage, the extent to which this happens must be balanced against shorter-term commercial imperatives.

Southtown is stronger when measured against best practice HRM outcomes, but weaker in terms of its financial outcomes. The need is thus to operate more efficiently while

maintaining its strong HR performance. By contrast Northborough is more profitable, but is less effective in HR terms and much less effective at satisfying its customers. Longer term this is likely to reduce profitability. The stronger candidates spotted that this is what we were looking for straight away and wrote extensive and thoughtful analyses developing these kinds of arguments. Many, however, seemed unable to comprehend that an organisation could perform well financially when not pursuing best practice HRM and rather avoided this issue. Very few acknowledged the possibility that factors other than HR ones could possibly provide the explanation. Some excellent answers managed to introduce theory and research evidence to back up points, tapping in for example to debates about the relative merits of hard and soft HRM. However, by far the most common reason that marks in the fail category were scored here was a tendency for some candidates simply to recite points from the case study when answering this first question. In some cases no original analysis was presented at all, in others a few ill-justified remarks were all that was provided. I would urge tutors to stress to their students that in order to achieve a pass at M level it is always important both to develop original arguments in answer to a question and to justify them effectively.

2.  What major cost savings might be achieved in terms of the HRM and HRD operations as a direct result of Big Shop's acquisition of both sites?

Answers to part 2 were typically a good deal stronger. Most, but not all, argued in favour of the possibility of economies of scale and/or the achievement of efficiency savings through merging management functions (including HRM and HRD). This would potentially reduce headcount, which here - as is often the case with this paper - some candidates simply refuse to countenance. There remains a great deal of idealism in too many answers and insufficient recognition of commercial reality. Many also wrote very competently about deploying staff to work flexibly across the two sites when necessary and by harmonising management systems. It should also be possible to standardise activities, adopting the most efficient and effective practices that have evolved in the two sets of operations. Further cost savings can be achieved via the management procurement jointly across both sites and through a range of less formal knowledge management / knowledge transfer initiatives. The strongest papers not only discussed these possibilities, but provided detail too, for example demonstrating that they had researched training operations in the retail sector and that they could write about these with authority. A lot of marks were picked up in the process.

3.  What should be Jasper's THREE major priorities for the coming year?

Any number of points could be made here relating either to the bringing together of two organisations with different cultures to specific initiatives focused on improving some metrics presented in the case. The more compelling the business case that was made by way of justification, the higher the marks we awarded better. We were relaxed about candidates putting forward proposals of a paternalistic/good practice nature, but it was important for gaining higher level marks that at least two of the three priorities had a

clearly commercial rationale and justification. A good number of candidates wrote thoughtfully and effectively about communication issues, correctly identifying the potential for suspicion and dissatisfaction when mergers occur. Others focused on tackling issues suggested by the metrics presented in the case, such as the high level of disciplinaries at Northborough. Weaker answers here either tended to be brief and poorly justified (for example, a list of bullet points without further elaboration) or more commonly very generic with limited reference being made to the case at all. Some weaker answers also lacked practicality. We are, after all here just asking for priorities for one man. The completion of a wholesale re-organisation or of a major culture change programme are thus overly ambitious.

## Section B

### Question A1

*Learning outcome: 1*

This question was intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 1 (review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD)

Only a minority of candidates opted for this question, despite it being based on the findings of a prominent and recent CIPD research report of a kind which always forms the basis of one question in Section B. Those who were either familiar with this research or with the idea of financial well-being initiatives did well here, even if they had no direct experience of them.

There are a number of financial well-being initiatives that are taken by organisations that have sought to develop thinking in this area. Some relate to enhancing financial education so that people are better equipped to manage their household finances more effectively. The CIPD report cited in the question discusses HRD interventions focusing on budgeting more effectively, investment and saving, becoming a savvier consumer and taking early action to avoid the escalation of financial problems. In addition organisations can communicate the advantages associated with existing reward practices in order to encourage take-up of opportunities such as occupational pensions, staff discount schemes, private health insurance, car leases etc. Thirdly, there is scope for introducing such practices where they are not provided and of flexible benefits systems which allow people to make efficient choices about how a portion of their salary is made up.

The wider ranging answers to part 2 were, the higher the mark awarded. It was important, as always when questions are asked about a 'business case', that candidates

did not simply put a case based on ethics and good practice, but also indicated ways in which employers stand to benefit financially. Answers also had to be clearly tailored to the needs of their own organisations and employees. The major advantages that typically accrue to employers from financial well-being initiatives arise from reduced absence, fewer stress-related and mental health problems, improved job performance (eg: decision-making and focus), higher morale and lower employee turnover.

The weaker answers to this question tended to avoid providing any kind of compelling business case, or more commonly, focused on well-being initiatives generally rather than on financial well-being in particular. A further group of answers were harder to mark because they focused on ways in which organisations could directly improve employee's finances, by for example increasing pay and benefits. By any strict definition these did comprise answers to the question, particularly when accompanied by a decent business case. So although this was not what we were looking for here, some marks were awarded to these candidates.

**Question A2**

*Learning outcome: 1*

This was a question that most candidates attempted. Part 1 was generally answered very competently, but a lot struggled a bit with part 2. In some cases no real attempt was even made to answer it directly.

There are several published lists of what should feature in a 'bundle of best practices' with slightly different emphases, so there were no definitive right or wrong answers here. What mattered was that a good number of varied interventions and practices were included in the answers. Purcell et al developed the following list:

• giving people career development opportunities
• giving people influence over their own area of work
• making jobs challenging and interesting
• providing good training
• appraising people regularly on their performance
• teamworking
• involving employees in decision-making
• providing a good work-life balance
• employing line managers 'who are good at leadership and who show respect'.

Pfeffer's list is also widely cited:

• employment security
• investing heavily in recruiting the right people
• extensive use of self-managed teams and decentralisation

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- high wages linked to organisational performance
- high levels of investment in training
- limited status differentials (ie: managers and staff are treated the same)
- willingness to share information.

Some candidates rather avoided setting out examples of HR interventions of this kind (that is, policies and practices etc), instead writing about outcomes. So, for example, they might state that they would expect to find low staff turnover, low levels of absence or high levels of employee engagement in an organisation which practiced 'best practice HRM'. This was not what we were looking for, but in fairness these were direct answers to the question on the paper and so were rewarded with some marks if properly explained.

Part 2 proved to be a lot more challenging, but should have been a question that candidates who have studied the best practice debate at M level were able to tackle. The key point to grasp here was that correlation is not the same thing as causation. The presence of a statistically significant link between HR practice and business performance does not mean that the one is necessarily leading to the other. It may be that financial success leads to sophisticated HR initiatives rather than the other way round, or that an independent variable like organisational reputation is behind both sets of measures. Outstanding answers, of which there were quite a few among this group, also demonstrated familiarity with critical perspectives which stress the distinction between HR rhetoric (positive and employee-centred) and the supposed reality in many organisations (intensification of work). We were pleased to see extensive referencing to the major studies in answers to this question, particularly David Guest, Fleetwood & Hesketh and others who have taken a sceptical stance of the best practice research.

### Question B3

*Learning outcome: 2*

This question was intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 2 (evaluate major theories relating to motivation, commitment and engagement at work and how these are put into practice by organisations).

This question was answered by rather fewer than half the candidates. Those who had a clear understanding of the term 'organizational citizenship behaviour' picked up plenty of marks as for them this was not a particularly difficult question.
Those who were less clear or tried to guess inevitably wrote rather more hesitantly and in some cases really demonstrated only the most limited level of relevant knowledge.

The term organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) has been very widely used in recent years as an example of the way that employees behave when they are positively engaged. It refers to actions which are not formally part of a person's core job duties and

which are therefore neither expected contractually nor the cause of any discipline when absent. They thus involve employees demonstrating forms of discretionary effort in the service of their organisation, its customers or fellow employees. Podsakoff et al's (2000) formulation is widely discussed and was cited here by stronger candidates in spirit if not by name. They suggested that OCB comes in seven major varieties (helping others to solve or avoid problems, maintaining a positive attitude in difficult circumstances, defending the organisation when it is criticised, complying with organisational policies, volunteering for additional duties or responsibilities, participating in organisational governance and taking steps to develop oneself so as better to serve your employer).

There are all manner of ways that OCB can be encouraged in a workplace, not least by managers noticing it and rewarding it, but by its nature it is not something that can be imposed. High trust relationships, a good employee relations climate, thoughtful management and well-designed jobs are generally regarded as pre-requisites although some also advocate testing for a willingness to engage in OCB when selecting and promoting staff. The stronger candidates had no difficulty developing compelling and well-informed arguments of these kinds.

### Question B4

*Learning outcome: 2*

This question was also intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 2 (evaluate major theories relating to motivation, commitment and engagement at work and how these are put into practice by organisations).

Most of the many candidates who attempted this question agreed broadly with the proposition contained in the question, albeit with some reservations. They were also able to illustrate their answers with examples from their own work experience. The stronger answers went on to argue, however, that other factors play a part too and that consequently interest and enjoyment are necessary but not sufficient in order to achieve high levels of employee motivation. Pay and working conditions are important, as are career development opportunities, good interpersonal relations with co-workers and line managers, perceptions of justice/equity/fairness and having SMART objectives/ challenges to achieve. Research also points to the link between motivation and meaningfulness in the context of work. There were plenty of references made here to prominent research studies (Maslow, McClelland, AMO etc)

It is of course difficult because many jobs are simply not intrinsically interesting and/or enjoyable. They are tedious, boring, tiring and sometimes stressful. Others have elements which are uninteresting and unenjoyable which nonetheless must be carried out. People also vary in terms of what they find interesting and enjoyable and what they do not, so the same job may motivate one person hugely, while tiring and boring another. Financial constraints and operational / technical barriers could also be

discussed in this context. Most candidates had no difficulty at all developing arguments along these line.

A wide variety of answers to part three were considered acceptable provided they are convincingly justified. Many focused on relevant job design issues and on concepts such as job enrichment/enlargement/rotation which most will have covered in the syllabus. Stronger candidates also made mention of the potential role played by employee selection in building a workforce who are more likely to demonstrate interest and enjoyment. Strengths-based thinking in the field of performance management was also potentially relevant here as were debates about physical working environments, positive psychological interventions and the importance of work-based social interaction in enhancing levels of motivation. Weaker answers, as is often the case, were descriptive rather than analytical. The question did not ask candidates to describe what their organisations currently do. Yet this is what weaker candidates had a tendency to tell us about. As always we would therefore stress the importance of answering the question directly and not a slightly different one.

### Question C5

*Learning outcome: 3*

This question was intended to test knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3 (debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations).

For a long time now whenever we have asked questions about effective leadership we have observed that a mercifully small minority of candidates, but a significant number nonetheless, cite Adolf Hitler as an example of an effective leader. It has continued despite pleas to tutors in successive examiners' reports to suggest to their students that they should not do so. This question was intended partly as a response to this tendency, requiring students to focus on integrity as a key (if not the key) quality of effective leaders. A good proportion of candidates took up the challenge, with mixed results. Stronger candidates cited all manner of examples of leaders they considered to have or not to have integrity. Mr Trump was inevitably frequently used as an example. Some made good use of theory too. There was plenty of scope here for originality in the arguments that were developed and the examples provided. The more compelling the arguments and the better justified they were, the higher the mark.

Weaker answers tended to miss the point of the question and comprised of quite a generic account of what constitutes effective leadership. The key point about integrity was thus missed. Others made perfectly good points but struggled to justify them at any length or with much conviction.

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**Question C6**

*Learning outcome: 3*

This question was also intended to test knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3 (debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations).

This was another pretty straight forward question about a major and topical issue that we regularly ask about on this paper. A good half of candidates opted for it and it caused few problems.

There are a variety of points made in leading texts about the limited number of women occupying senior leadership roles in organisations. These fall into two main groups. First there is evidence to suggest that, on average, women tend to be less confident than their male counterparts about their ability to take on top jobs. They hold back from putting themselves forward and even, once in these positions, often ascribe their success to luck rather than ability. There is also some evidence of a lack of willingness to take on senior positions despite being highly qualified to do so. The second major explanation relates to what is sometimes defined as 'institutional sexism' in organisations which principally manifests itself in a culture and sets of expectations in respect of leadership qualities that are more typically male (or even 'alpha male'/macho) than female in nature. The result is a tendency for men to be seen as better suited for these roles.

Stronger answers to part 2 followed from the points made in part 1. The need is to take steps to try to address the issues raised by both groups of research findings. In other words, HR officers need to look both at how to empower and build confidence in women who have senior leadership potential, while also addressing the systemic barriers, particularly cultural barriers. These are not easy tasks and inevitably involve taking steps that will only bear fruit in the longer term. The practical interventions that appear to work well include mentoring schemes, HRD interventions aimed specifically at women and effectively communicating / publicising information about role models. On the institutional side the stronger candidates demonstrated awareness of the long-standing debates about quotas and targets for women on senior management boards, facilitating promotion pipelines for job share/part-time employees and the potential evolution of a fashion for less 'heroic'  and more 'authentic' leadership styles.

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**Question D7**

*Learning outcome: 4*

This question was intended to test knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 4 (contribute to the promotion of flexible working and effective change management in organisations).

This proved to be the most popular choice of question in Section B, being attempted by a good majority of candidates. Answers to part 1 were very good in the main. It was part 2 that caused some difficulties, but in the main answers here were sound and effective too.

The growth of self-employment as a prime career choice for professionals has been predicted for decades and now appears to be being realised in practice. Much press coverage focuses on the gig economy, zero-hours contracting and bogus self-employment, but the evidence suggests that large numbers of highly qualified people, including HR specialists, are choosing to work on a freelance basis and making a good living doing so. The main reasons appear to be a desire to dictate how many hours one works, where work is performed, and to an extent what the hourly or daily rate will be. Freelancers who gain a good reputation and have rare skills often have more than enough work and are able to raise their rates so as to earn more, while working fewer hours. The work can be more varied and people can base themselves at home. There can also be tax advantages when freelancers work through their own companies.  A lot of candidates were able to back up general points of this kind with specific examples from their own places of work or personal experience. The answers were more compelling as a result and marks were picked up.

Recruiting freelancers is getting easier with the rise of app-based platforms on which they advertise their services and social media sites such as LinkedIn. Over time freelancers gain a good word-of-mouth reputation and also become more adept at marketing themselves to potential employers. Engagement and retention is more challenging because freelancers, by their nature, can never be fully integrated like directly employed people are and will be no more committed to an organisation than the organisation can be to them. They will always be contingent workers. However, larger employers of freelancers are now beginning to explore how they can manage the relationship with valued freelancers effectively, for example by designating HR team members as 'freelance relationship officers' and the like. The best advice is to manage ongoing relationships of this kind professionally, maintaining contact in between assignments, treating freelancers with respect, involving them in decision-making, including them in social events, HRD events, staff meetings, internal communication initiatives and induction programmes etc. As with employees there is much to be gained at very little cost from praising freelancers for a job well-done, asking and taking their advice, generally making clear to them that they are perceived as being part of the team

and maintaining a positive psychological contract. Managing expectations is thus important. It also makes sense to take care to pay freelance staff on time and to book their services well in advance. The key is to become a reliable and reputable employer of freelancers in the same way that well-managed HR functions look to make their organisations "employers of choice" in respect of directly employed staff.

**Question D8**

*Learning outcome: 4*

This question was also intended to test knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 4 (contribute to the promotion of flexible working and effective change management in organisations).

We have found over several years of marking 7LMP exam papers that students appear very attached to Kotter's model and will take every opportunity both to cite it in questions on change management and to describe it at some length in answers to Section A. The aim here was therefore to provide an opportunity to evaluate the model in greater depth, ascertaining in the process how far candidates were able to analyse it critically. Candidates were free to agree or disagree with some of the criticisms set out in the question stem, to develop them further or to set out a more balanced argument that focused both on strengths and weaknesses. What mattered as far as marks were concerned was that a thoughtful and well-informed argument was developed which drew on experience / observations and/or on published case studies of change management episodes.

Importantly the question did not ask students to describe the model or set out its eight stages in a descriptive fashion. Those who did this were thus not marked at all highly, nor were those who essentially repeated back to us the points that are set out in the question without further explanation or development. Some cited some of the stages in Kotter's model as part of a wider-ranging answer, but it was important as far as marks are concerned that analysis and evaluation is rewarded and not simple description. The better-informed and compellingly argued the answer, the higher the mark awarded.

**Question E9**

*Learning outcome: 7*

This question was intended to test knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 7 (promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD in organisations).

A majority of candidates attempted this. Few had any problems with Part 1, although in some cases good examples were not really provided, or were but not explained or integrated with the rest of the question. Part 2 was more of a struggle for some, there

being a tendency to assume that HR practices themselves are ethically sound and that there is thus not a lot that needs to be improved. The focus was thus placed on wider organisational measures, which is fine, but there as a need to discuss the HR contribution to these in order to pick up good marks.

Digby Jones devotes part of his book to arguing that business organisations have been very ineffective at public relations and at getting proper publicity for the positive things they do for our society and economy. Press stories tend to be negative because these sell newspapers and the result over time has been a more general trashing of the reputation of business activity. The recession of 2008 – 11 had a major impact in this regard. However, Digby Jones also concedes that there are significant real issues to address and that this negative reputation is not simply due to bad PR. Most of the book is focused on matters such as tax avoidance, excessive boardroom pay, insufficient attention being paid to environmental protection/sustainability, too little training, too much job insecurity, too much offshoring and too many examples of unethical practice in respect of relationships with customers, employees and suppliers. While a few rogues bring negative publicity that tars all businesses (especially big businesses) with a negative reputation, there are plenty of genuine systemic problems that need fixing too. These kinds of points were made in the stronger answers and nicely justified with illustrative examples.

As far as part 2 and HR is concerned there were many potential points that could be made both in respect of image-building (via CSR initiatives for example) and in dealing with the substantial issues. Stronger answers explored the potential role played by codes of ethics, whistleblowing policies, values-based recruitment and performance management activities, and a wide range of potential HRD interventions that promote ethical conduct, sustainability and fair dealing. The wider the scope and better-informed the arguments, the higher the mark. In addition some stronger candidates also discussed the more direct ways in which HR can help rebuild the reputation of 'business' by helping to ensure that managers treat people well, that rewards are fairly distributed and that employees have a voice which is listened to and taken account of.

**Question E10**

*Learning outcome: 7*

This question was also intended to test knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 7 (promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD in organisations).

This was the least effectively answered question on the paper. In part this may have been simply because many came to it right at the end when they were tired after three hours of solid concentration and also often running out of time. However, there were also a lot of very thin answers with little substance or no real attempt made to justify the

points that were being made. Some hardly wrote about legal matters at all, preferring to dwell on HR and general business ethics. Others simply tried to pack far far too much content into what is after all a one hour session which can by its nature only focus on a few core topics.

The indicative content for Learning Outcome 7 includes the expression 'managing within the expectations of the law'. So while people studying 7LMP will not be expected to have any detailed understanding of any particular area of law in their countries, they should be broadly familiar with the regulatory frameworks, what is expected of employers and the chief methods of enforcement. They should certainly be able to articulate a good business case for meeting legal obligations or one based on sanctions for non-compliance.

The question was deliberately phrased to allow candidates a very wide choice of topic areas to focus on. It was, however, important that points were justified effectively and, in respect of part 2, that the methods used to meet learning objectives are discussed as well as the objectives themselves. These could, for example, include role plays, case studies, quizzes, discussion exercises or question and answer sessions. In order to achieve high marks the candidates needed to explain how their chosen method would help meet the learning objective and not simply state that it will do so. In many cases objectives were stated, but not really explained and too little said about the method that would be used to help meet the stated learning objectives.

## Conclusion

Overall we were pleased with the performance achieved by this cohort of students. As I stated in the papers included several examples of quite outstanding answers; among the best I have ever seen in many years of teaching HRM in universities and working with CIPD on the national exams. There were also, however, papers here which fell some way below an M level, however generously defined. Some students appear to be woefully under-prepared for the paper, having limited knowledge of core subject areas and sadly in some cases only very scanty understanding of the issues raised in the case study. Too often basic mistakes are apparently made such as failing to read a question, failing to answer both parts, failing to provide a justification to back up a point or a failure to make effective use of the time available. These are all problems that can be helpfully addressed with practice and good tuition. I would urge candidates to look at past papers and at the reports that follow such as this one, read widely, prepare the case study thoroughly and make sure that you cover all the issues set out in the CIPD 7LMP standards documentation. The CIPD's Level 7 papers are tough, but as this cohort amply demonstrated, eminently passable if you prepare really well and take care always to answer questions fully and directly.

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Chief examiner