



CAM Diploma

121 – Public Relations

Senior Examiner Assessment Review Report June 2011



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UNIT NAME: Public Relations

AWARD NAME: CAM Diploma

DATE: June 2011

- **Background to the paper:**

The format of the paper has remained unchanged with a compulsory Question One, worth 50 marks, that is normally clearly broken down into several parts. Candidates then get to choose two further questions from four, all of which are worth 25 marks.

Typically Question One will draw upon a real-life example and give candidates the opportunity to provide answers to a series of questions within a clear context.

Questions Two to Five are short answer questions.

- **Comments on how the marking scheme was applied in terms of:**

- Concept, Application and Evaluation
- Syllabus coverage
- Use of command words and the extent to which answers reflected what was required
- The relative weighting of each part of a question/task and an indication of what aspects of the question/task required most care and attention
- What differentiated the A, B, C, or D grades

The syllabus was widely covered in this paper and considerable effort is made to ensure that at least 70% of the syllabus is covered in each paper. Having a compulsory question that explores a topic in greater detail allows for many parts of the syllabus to be covered in one question.

Questions are carefully shaped to ensure the effective use of command words and that candidates are quickly and unambiguously able to interpret what is required of them.

Where questions are in a number of parts, the specific marks for each element are always indicated. To assist candidates with some questions, an indication of the various elements will be given.

When 'the preparation of slides' is required, an indication is given of the number that should be prepared.

The marking grid was carefully applied and a high level of consistency was achieved with the June 2011 papers.

Grade A papers are usually those which provide strong answers that effectively deal with the questions asked and provide a clear sense of the application of knowledge and are supported with concrete examples.

Grade B papers are usually those which have a good grasp of the question asked and clearly demonstrate understanding but do not always contain the level of evidence or insight for a very high mark.

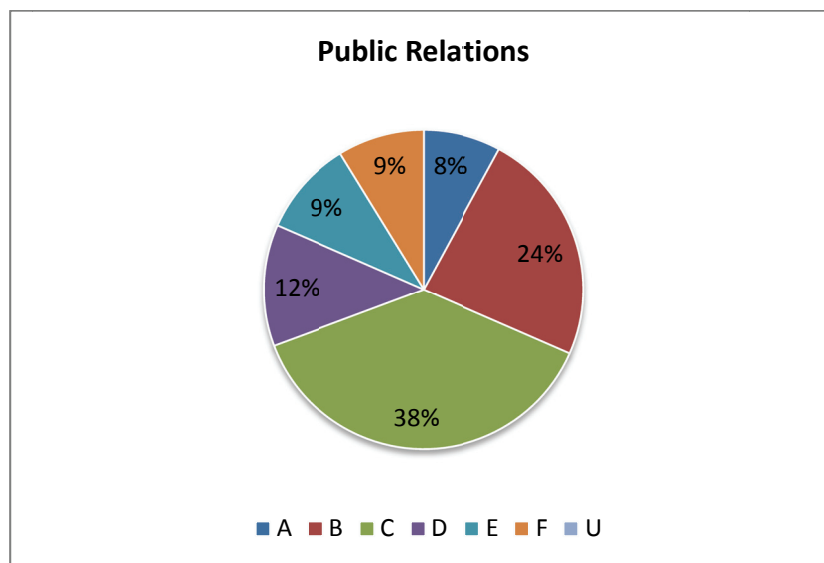
Grade C papers are those which provide a reasonable level of understanding and contain sufficient information to provide a coherent response to the question asked. They do not normally contain strong evidence nor powerful insights into the application of theory or understanding.

Grade D papers will often address the question asked, but lack certain key information or application of concepts. However, the most common reason for obtaining a grade D is poor exam time management.

- **A general overview of how the assessment was tackled, including a statistical analysis on the assessment as a whole**

The overall pass rate for the June 2011 paper was: 69.30%.

The grade profile was as follows:



- **Feedback on the academic quality of the cohort(s) that has just been examined and the quality of the teaching, as judged by the results**

The number of top grades has been improving, particularly due to very strong compulsory question answers. Also there has been a steady improvement in the number of good answers although the pass rate was slightly lower than in December as a number of candidates failed to deal with all parts of the compulsory question.

There is evidence that students are being strongly coached on how to tackle the compulsory questions although occasionally students do trot out a standard answer that does not deal with the question asked.

It is vitally important to address the questions posed and to take careful note of the weighting of the marks.

- **Commentary as to whether recommendations made in previous years have been properly followed up**

There is a strong understanding of what is required to secure a pass for this paper.

Students seem to be far more familiar with the impact of social media and the importance of managing relationships with journalists.

- **Comments and examples of:**
 - strengths and good practice
 - common mistakes when tackling this type of question

The best answers are always those that deal with the context of the questions and demonstrate the application of learning in a convincing and practical manner.

Answers that use examples to illustrate points invariably gain higher marks.

It is always to a student's advantage to clearly lay their answers out according to the suggested structure and to ensure that they have clearly laid out the reasons for their approach to a question.

Weaker answers invariably miss out parts of the questions or students decide to do brain dumps or use rigid structures that they have learnt in a classroom or from a text book.

However, many students who fail to pass do so because they have left too little time to complete their final answer or have missed out a significant part of an answer to a question.

Question One:

The major issue on Question One was the failure of the candidates to take full account of the mark allocation.

Specifically, some candidates gave strong answers for Part A which was worth 20 marks.

Clear, well-structured media releases appeared in a wide variety of papers.

Generally, Part B was poorly tackled. Many candidates failed to answer the question and provide specific advice in relation to a photo-call.

Some candidates did very well on Parts A and C but poorly on Part B.

Question Two:

This was a popular question and generally well answered with candidates laying out a series of pertinent steps.

Some candidates provided information that went beyond the short list nature of the question for which no additional marks were awarded.

There were some very strong answers laying out the way in which pitches could be assessed.

Overall a majority of candidates attempting this question received good marks.

Question Three:

Generally questions requiring 'speaker notes' tend to attract a high number of responses. On this occasion the number was lower than expected, perhaps because the topic was less familiar.

The majority of answers held to the format and a growing number sought to provide real-life examples.

The issue of reputation is core to the practice of PR and at times candidates did not reveal sufficient understanding of its importance.

Question Four:

This proved to be the least popular of the questions on the paper.

Candidates often struggle to write to a specific length under pressure despite it being a core PR skill. Nevertheless, a number of strong answers were prepared by candidates who had an excellent working knowledge of the legal frameworks and voluntary agreements applying to the industry.

The points raised in this question are increasingly important across the industry and candidates should be familiar with them.

Question Five:

This proved to be a very popular question.

Many candidates provided well thought through answers with clear advice around messaging and potential question areas. However, some made these generic rather than trying to relate them closely to the topics being covered.

Tips for TV were also well covered and many answers had a professional feel to them.

The majority of candidates attempting the question scored a pass or above.

- **Guidance about how candidates can avoid making similar errors and strategies for improving performance**

Candidates as ever would do well to weigh up carefully how marks for questions are allocated; this is particularly important for the compulsory question. However, there is scope to brush up on the legal and voluntary frameworks as they apply to the industry.

- **Suggestions of possible alternative approaches to tackling a question/task or parts of a question/task while making it clear that it is not the only way**

For questions that require copy to be prepared or an argument to be made there will always be some flexibility in marking.

- **Recommendations for how performance can be improved in future assessments**

- Thorough revision of the syllabus
- Practising past papers

- Reviewing Senior Examiner reports
- Undertaking wider reading

- **Clarification about any syllabus or assessment changes**

None are planned.

- **Possible future assessment themes**

Future papers will continue to explore the importance of reputation, social media and the modern application of media relations.