CANDIDATE DETAILS

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CIPD Advanced Level Examinations

Human Resource Management in Context

January 2021- Examiners Report

Date: 26 January 2021	**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.

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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 2021- 7HRC Examiners Report

Before we begin, a tribute to Professor Mick Marchington

Professor Mick Marchington was one of CIPD's most notable Champions. The news of his sudden death has been a shock to the very many people who knew him. For almost forty years Mick was involved in CIPD examinations, and for most of those he was a Chief Examiner, and latterly, a Chief Assessor. He continued his involvement in exams as a panel member of the Examinations Board contributing to the examination process from start to finish. In meetings he provided advice, and made recommendations for change, and it was not unknown for him to initiate intense debates on issues he felt passionate about. He was never a 'pushover' but in his professional capacity he was the epitome of a 'critical friend'. He visited many, if not most CIPD Centres and worked with tutors to advise on CIPD standards. He leaves a legacy that is both personal and professional: a colleague, mentor, and friend.

Introduction

This cohort of candidates were in the unfortunate position of having to take the exam during a time of Government lock-down. This precluded any gathering of students; consequently, these CIPD candidates sat the exam in on-line isolation. 264 sat the exam. This was more than in January 2020 and considerably fewer than September 2020, when candidates from the cancelled May exam joined the September cohort. Consequently, it is more beneficial to compare the percentages. The percentage pattern of grade allocations is similar for the two cohorts. The fail rate is 32%, just one percent more than the previous cohort. The percentage of candidates in the merit and distinction grades is higher for the recent cohort. Whilst this is not a substantial increase, it is to be welcomed.

Grade	7HRC	
Distinction	16	6%
Merit	44	17%
Pass	119	45%
Marginal Fail	32	12%
Fail	53	20%
Total	264	
Pass Rate	68%	

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.

The University of Middle England (UME) is a public university located in the Midlands, in a semi-rural area, on the outskirts of the city of Brumfield. Within a twenty-mile radius there are a further two universities: One a long-established research-intensive university, the other a former Further Education College, which continues to serve the local community and promote the widening of access to higher education.

UME is a small university. It focuses on vocational studies, particularly in education (teacher-training) and health (nurse-training and clinical research). The six Schools that make up the university are: Humanities and Arts, Management, Computer studies, Sport and Leisure, Education and Health and Clinical Practice. However, about 25 years ago UME set up a School of European Studies (SES) to create a seventh School. A core of five academic staff came from two of its existing Schools - Humanities and Arts, and Management, together with two new academic appointments and a new administrator. With the benefit of a European Union grant three further appointments were made to set up a small Research Unit.

The staff who had moved from the School of Management to SES developed Economics, Law and Employment Relations as a joint honours degree (e.g., Economics and European Studies). Whilst the staff from the School of Humanities and Arts developed programmes in European Languages and Sociology. Several part-time, hourly paid, temporary staff supplemented the five full-time staff on a flexible basis.

A significant number of students came from overseas through a European Exchange Scheme. There was also a strong domestic market of students and the programmes were at full capacity each year. The number of Full Time Equivalent students comprised 15% of the total 12,000 students at the university. SES grew from the original core of seven academic staff and one administrator to twenty academic staff and four administrators. In addition, there were up to four hourly-paid temporary contract staff at any one time, providing additional cover where student numbers were high.

Through research and overseas assignments, the SES Research Unit established a strong reputation among employers and fellow academics. This enhanced the University's reputation and its work in other subject areas also became more widely known. New opportunities emerged, and networks were built that were also useful to other parts of the University.

Currently the Unit is led by a full-time Professor, supported by two administrators, two Research Assistants and a full time Researcher. Together they make up the core team. Staff from SES worked

in the Unit on an occasional basis, or through a Sabbatical arrangement, usually lasting one semester. Additional temporary research contracts arose through the external sponsorship of projects. These posts were highly sought after.

Elsewhere in the university the next ten years saw a continuing growth of the School of Management. It delivered nine subject areas, (including marketing, accountancy, Law and Human Resource Management). It had around two and a half thousand students and twenty-five academic staff and was the second biggest School in the university.

The School of Humanities and Arts remained strong in some subjects, whilst others had declined significantly. There had been a rapid decline in the study of Languages. Sociology had lost much of its appeal. These two subjects were taught in both the School of Humanities and Arts, and (with a European focus), in the SES.

To attract students, the SES decided to offer post-graduate qualifications. The first of these was an MSc in Sociology and European Employment Relations. It struggled to recruit students, partly due to competition from the nearby research-intensive university, and partly because the political landscape was changing. After three years the course was closed. This coincided with a decline in European Studies at undergraduate level that was reflected across the entire country. Employment Relations had given way to Human Resource Management, and this was part of the School of Management's portfolio of courses.

The European Union Referendum result felt like the 'last straw' for most of the SES programmes. There was concern that the UK was creating a 'hostile environment' which would deter overseas students. Brexit (as it became known) would speed-up the demise of European Studies among home students, for whom it had already lost popularity and employability potential. Going forward, access to EU grants and bursaries would, for the most part, cease and this would potentially impact upon the Research Unit as well as student numbers. Borderless travel to, and within, the European mainland would end, potentially bringing new restrictions, regulations and bureaucracy.

The consequence for the SES is high staff turnover. Whilst this, to some extent, helps the allocation of ever-decreasing work, there is concern that the university is losing its brightest and best. In the SES there are now fifteen full time academic staff and just two administrators. Of the fifteen, four pick-up some of their work (often on an ad hoc basis) from other Schools within the University. The SES is surviving through its association with the Research Unit, which, in turn, is heavily guarded by its current Professor. It has already recently lost one of its researchers to the nearby research-intensive university. Apart from Education and Health and Clinical Studies, other Schools are interested in either collaborating with the SES Research Unit or developing one of their own.

There is disagreement among the University's Senior Management Team about the way forward. Some favour the whole of the SES (including the Research Unit) being merged into the Management School. Others agree with part of this but want to keep the Research Unit autonomous. Others favour breaking up the SES and reallocating staff across the University, whilst agreeing that the Research Unit should remain separate. The favouring of the Research Unit becoming autonomous is likely to have been influenced by extensive lobbying from its Professor and Lead.

One consequence of all that is happening is a change in staff morale. In the SES there is anxiety and despondency whereas the Research Unit is in conflict mode, ready to fight for autonomy, led

by their vociferous and popular Professor. In the School of Humanities and Arts, and the Management School some staff are organising a stance against any change. Whilst (aside from Education and Health and Clinical Practice) the other Schools are worrying that they will be next in line for change and reorganisation. Overall, there is an air of gloom across much of the university.

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

SECTION A

Learning Outcomes:

LO3: How organisational and HR strategies are shaped by and developed in response to internal and external environmental factors.

LO5: Globalisation and international forces and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.

It is recommended you spend equal time on each question in this section.

UME has decided to undertake a major review of its European Studies' programmes and Research Unit. A review panel is established, and, as Head of HR, you are a member of it. In the light of the potential implications arising from the review on an already concerned and despondent staff you will need to be well-informed, analytical and persuasive in the tasks delegated to you. These tasks are to:

Question 1

Produce a SWOT analysis, with detailed discussion, of the School of European Studies, including its Research Unit as it is at present.

Chief Examiner comments on Question 1
The answers varied between a bare pass and distinction. Only a few failed to make the standard, and these were mainly short bullet point responses with hardly any discussion. Good answers provided detailed discussion of past and future developments at SES; poor answers failed to develop appropriate discussion and relied on bullet points which tended to be short. It may be useful for tutors to remind students that bullet points are very unlikely to provide enough information. To meet the standard required at M-level a good discussion is evaluative and shows insightfulness of the case study. A bullet point response can be useful as a prelude to the discussion. Good answers tended to use bullet points in this way. They provided basic information and were followed by a narrative which provided a thorough argument of the issues.

Question 2

Produce a persuasively written set of recommendations on the future of the SES and its Research Unit in terms of both its activities and its location within the University structure.

Chief Examiner comments on Question 2

Most candidates chose one of the three options noted in the case study for their recommendation. Better answers built on the SWOT discussion to persuasively justify their choice and provided feasible recommendations. These answers made clear the strategic decisions that needed to be made to give meaning and practical application to the proposed recommendations. Candidates had to discuss and evaluate to answer this question. It is this that would put them in a position to be able to make persuasive recommendations, clearly informed by the evaluation. The majority of answers came across as possible options and not recommended and well-reasoned courses of action. Quite often it appeared as though candidates were unwilling to make firm, practical recommendations. This may have been, in part, a consequence of undertaking insufficient evaluation to justify a particular set of recommendations.

Candidates should be reminded of the importance of the GAC; in particular that assessment includes ability of application and persuasiveness of argument, which are always part of the case study tasks.

Question 3

Critically analyse ways in which HR could help in the change process, and the potential challenges it will meet.

Chief Examiner comments on Question 3
To make a reasonable attempt at this, candidates should have made links to the recommendations they had prepared in the previous task. In some cases, this was difficult because, as noted earlier, they had not arrived at a clear set of recommendations. The main distinction between better and weaker answers was the extent to which the change process was applied to the circumstances of the case and the recommendations in the previous task. Some answers did not refer to the case study organisation at all. Answers that had made clear recommendations about relocating work to other areas of the university tended to be the ones that understood the strategic aspect of the this and the role of HR in engaging in change for the university, going forward.

SECTION B

Answer <u>FIVE</u> questions in this section, <u>ONE</u> per subsection A to E.

For example, you need to answer either:
A1 <u>OR</u> A2
B3 <u>OR</u> B4
C5 <u>OR</u> C6
D7 <u>OR</u> D8
E9 <u>OR</u> E10

DO <u>NOT</u> ANSWER BOTH QUESTIONS IN EACH SUBSECTION

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SECTION B
*Please only answer A1 **OR** A2.*

A1

Learning Outcome 6: Demographic, social and technological trends and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.

"I'm finding working from home really difficult", says a colleague. "I thought it would be great, with lots of flexibility, nice surroundings, and no interruptions from anyone".

    i.   Discuss the potential difficulties of working from home, and why home – working may be particularly disadvantageous for women's careers.

   AND

    ii.   Analyse the ways in which HR can support staff who work from home.

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

Chief Examiner comments on Question A1

This was by far the more favoured question. The marks ranged across the grades. The most significant deficit in answers was discussing "why home-working may be particularly disadvantageous for women's careers". There was a lack of research and/or sources of reputable publications. This aspect of the answer tended to offer only general reasons why women are disadvantaged because of other responsibilities, rather than addressing the specific context of home working.

Many candidates would have raised their mark if they had shown more understanding of how HR could support those working from home. Of course, the strongest answers covered all three areas fully.

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SECTION B
Please only answer A1 <u>OR</u> A2.

A2

Learning Outcome 6: Demographic, social and technological trends and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.

You are the HR manager of a call-centre employing around 450 staff. The IT team are about to overhaul and update the HR support software. Before they even start, rumours are circulating around the organisation. For example:

"They are going to keep all sorts of information about us, and we won't even know what they have.
They'll try to stop us getting on Facebook at lunch times.
They'll use information to decide who to promote and who to get rid of.
I usually chat to my friend through the intranet, I hope they don't stop that.
My friend says they don't have any right to put anything about us without our permission".

　　i.　　How will you respond to the situation in both the immediate and the short term? Justify your answer.

　　AND

　　ii.　　Identify **THREE** IT practices in your organisation that you would like to see modified. Justify your answer.

Chief Examiner comments on Question A2

The context of this question is especially clear in the stem, where it provides a guide to the sort of issues that should be discussed. There are five of them in the stem. A point to make here, and one that applies more generally across the paper, is the importance of the stem. Candidates should not just rush to the question but look at how the stem might help to guide and provide a framework for tackling the question.

This question was not popular, and a number of candidates wrote rather generally about the need to communicate with staff without giving any indication about how different problems, such as those in the stem, should be tackled.

SECTION B
*Please only answer B3 **OR** B4.*

B3

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

During the second wave of Corona Virus, Britain's leading business lobby group, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) joined forces to call for the Government's financial support scheme to be extended until Spring 2021. Within a very short time, the Government agreed to this.

Identify and critically analyse how any **TWO** internal and **TWO** external factors gave these or similar institutions the power and influence to successfully lobby governments in the situation noted above.

Chief Examiner comments on Question B3
This was another unpopular question, which is not surprising as it relied on a candidate having the specific knowledge and understanding of how business lobby groups gain their power and influence. This is not knowledge that you can pick up from current affairs, so anyone attempting it should be confident in their ability to provide a quality response. Some were able to do this to merit standard. Others were at the bare pass and fail grades. It is important that candidates had an understanding of both the CBI and the TUC as lobby groups if they were to give both internal and external factors that give them power and influence.

SECTION B
Please only answer B3 OR B4.

B4

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

"Economists had already predicted a steep increase in unemployment over the winter, even before today's planned closure of shops and leisure venues when England enters into its second lockdown. More than 670,000 people have lost their jobs during the pandemic as struggling companies across the economy cut costs." (The Guardian, 05.11.2020). Similar trends have occurred across the UK and the world.

Identify and critically analyse the effectiveness of any **THREE** actions governments have taken to bring down the level of unemployment. Justify your answer.

Chief Examiner comments on Question B4

This was a popular question and answers could be based on media news, though better answers went beyond this. Most answers focussed on the current actions to deal with potential redundancies resulting from the Coronavirus, although several considered broader approaches, for example spending on infrastructure and 'Kickstart'. A small number of candidates named the Bank of England's role; their understanding was that it was under the control of the Government. Given that it used to be, markers did give some credit to the discussions about how changes in borrowing, and/or the interest rate could be used.

Most showed an understanding of each initiative, but some omitted to tackle the important parts of the question – how they were aimed at reducing unemployment or at least restraining it; together with a critical evaluation of their effectiveness. This latter was usually the weakest part of the answers.

SECTION B
Please only answer C5 __OR__ C6.

C5

Learning Outcome 1: Contemporary organisations and their principal environments.

Culture has been described as 'the way we do things around here'. It has also been defined as 'shared meanings and understandings passed down an organisation through language, symbols and artefacts'.

   i.   How would you describe the dominant culture in your organisation? Draw upon theory and theoretical models to inform your description.

   AND

   ii.   Critically analyse the extent to which your organisation's culture influences HR policies and practices.

Chief Examiner comments on Question C5

Few candidates answering this question made links to mainstream theories. Many answers talked about culture in generalised ways. Most candidates offered an assessment of why and how these had had an impact on their organisation.

The main difference in the quality of the answers was how well they evaluated the response and, particularly, what more could have been done – the latter part was often missed out. The attraction of question 6, using aspects of STEEPLE may account for the small number answering this question. Candidates do often find it difficult to understand how to use theory and to use it to critically evaluate something. It may be worthwhile doing more around how to use theories to frame answers. They tend to expect to do it for SWOT and STEEPLE and so they prepare for these. A number need to make the leap into seeing a range of theories and how to apply them. Few candidates were clear about culture theory. The link to HR was, for the most part, rather weak.

SECTION B
Please only answer C5 OR C6.

C6

Learning Outcome 1: Contemporary organisations and their principal environments.

Contemporary organisations operate in both external and internal contexts. External contexts can be identified using the acronym STEEPLE (social, technological, economic, environmental, political, legal and ethical).

i.   Select any **TWO** STEEPLE factors and critically analyse how each has affected your organisation over the last three years.

AND

ii.   Evaluate the ways in which your organisation has responded to these effects and what more could have been done. Justify your answer.

Chief Examiner comments on Question C6
I can imagine their hearts leaping as candidates saw a theoretical model that they knew, and hoped and anticipated would be somewhere in the exam. Quality of answers varied from clear fail through to distinction. The better answers provided good critical analysis, related well to individual organisations, and provided appropriate evaluation in the second part of the question. Weak answers tended to list two factors without critical analysis of how they affect employing organisation or provide appropriate evaluation or justification when considering the second part of the question. It may be useful to remind students that where a question asks them to select part of the model – as it does here – then to do more than that is using valuable time on work that cannot be credited. No doubt candidates imagine that if they write about every aspect covered by the STEEPLE model, they will impress the marker with their knowledge. However, when asked to choose just **two** parts of the acronym that is all they will be credited for.

SECTION B
Please only answer D7 OR D8.

D7

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

The private sector is part of a competitive market with outside forces that can influence its success.

i.   Select any **ONE** private sector organisation and analyse the impact of external forces using Porter's five forces model (bargaining power of buyers; threat of entry to the industry; pressure from substitute products; bargaining power of suppliers; intensity of rivalry amongst existing competitors).

AND

ii.   What conclusions do you draw for the potential future success of your chosen organisation?

Chief Examiner comments on Question D7
This was a popular question. Candidates were given the Porter model, and this may have led some into a false sense of security. As noted elsewhere, candidates need to be able to use the model as a tool for evaluation. A large proportion of those that attempted this question did not achieve a pass. The reasons ranged from not understanding the model, to having a scant knowledge of the business selected, consequently, for a number of candidates the level of analysis was inadequate. It would appear that even if a candidate does understand the model of the Five Forces, many struggled to apply it. This bears out an earlier concern that candidates may know the headings that make up the component parts of a model, but then struggle to use the model to discuss, analyse and evaluate the topic they should be applying it to.

SECTION B

Please only answer D7 <u>OR</u> D8.

D8

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

You have worked in administration in the public sector for seventeen years. You have just been offered your first job in the private sector. The organisation is a Finance and Management Consultancy operating in a highly competitive market.

   i.   Compare and contrast the public and private sectors in terms of the pressures of work and the differences in working environment.

   AND

   ii.   Based on your analysis, decide whether you will accept the new job. Justify your answer.

Chief Examiner comments on Question D8
This was not a particularly popular question. Several of those that attempted gave some sound evidence about the different values, cultures, and pressures of work. Good answers discussed sources of finance and power. Weaker answers tended to fall into the trap that one sector is good, the other bad. In particular the public sector was (still) portrayed as providing an easier pace of work and greater job security; whilst the private sector was portrayed as strongly competitive, goals driven and best suited to career-driven' people. In the better answers there was some recognition that not only were there differences, but also similarities, between the two sectors. These answers could note that pressures were imposed on employees in both sectors, but they might be different kinds of pressures. In these answers too there was reasonable justification for either moving or not moving to the private sector.

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SECTION B
Please only answer E9 __OR__ E10.

E9

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

A friend criticises the way some organisations treat their employees. She says the psychological contract is a myth and that flexibility is a management tool used to exercise control over workers.

Respond **EITHER** in favour **OR** against what she has said, using practical examples and research to support your case.

Chief Examiner comments on Question E9

The starting point for deciding to answer this question has to be a basic knowledge and understanding of what is meant by the psychological contract. From there the candidate needed to be able to articulate what aspect of work each side of the contract might break, and how this might happen. Armed with this, a number of candidates went on to provide clear cut cases as to why the contract isn't a myth and that it is good for both employers and employees.

As an aside, it was interesting to note that no one argued in agreement that the psychological contract is a myth and a tool for management control. Overall, there were some really good answers to this question but also some weak answers that failed to provide evidence of appropriate understanding of the concept. This is quite significant, given the nature and significance to HR of the psychological contract.

SECTION B
Please only answer E9 __OR__ E10.

E10

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

"My boss is power-mad", declares a friend over dinner:
"He picks on every little detail of our work.
Regularly reminds us that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is his cousin.
Keeps reminding us that he oversees our annual bonus.
Keeps important information to himself, so that we must ask for it, to do our jobs properly.
It's so unfair. I spent a lot of time getting my qualifications, and sometimes, without the help I give him, things could go horribly wrong".

  i. Identify and explain the sources of power that are evident in your friend's remarks.

      AND

  i. Critically analyse why power plays a central part in organisational politics.

Draw upon reputable publications and research to support your answer.

Chief Examiner comments on Question E10

Candidates tended to do better in the first part of this question. The most successful candidates applied themselves effectively to all parts of the question, including some references to published sources. In other answers, although they were quite good, research evidence was limited. A fair understanding was shown about the nature of power; the majority using the French and Raven model.

A weakness with some was that there was just a description of the five types of power the model provides. What was also needed was an understanding of when and where these power-types might be found and the ways in which they can help employees to negotiate through the, often difficult, politics of working life. Whilst better answers recognised power and politics as part of organisational life in the competition for resources, weaker answers tended to see power as something that is wrong in organisational life.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Below are the comments from the feedback, that have common currency. I know different tutors, and different Centres have had different numbers of years delivering CIPD programmes. So, particularly for those of you who have 'heard this many times before' please bear with me, I still think some things are worth repeating. We all know the students who insist they are listening and then at the end of the session ask a question about the very thing you have just explained. I think this time I have two particular issues that I want to 'flag-up'. They are the first two on the list below.

- *Candidates should be reminded of the importance of the GAC; in particular that assessment includes ability of application and persuasiveness of argument, which are always part of the case study tasks.*

Some of the markers have commented that candidates need to remember all aspects of the GAC when they are writing. Some questions use a context where persuasiveness and a good argument are needed, many add to that the need to be business oriented. So, candidates need to understand that the exam **is not just about knowledge and understanding**. That is just a good starting point.

- *Candidates should not just rush to the question but look at how the stem might help to guide and provide a framework for tackling the question.*

There is a concern that some candidates do not understand that the stem has any relevance to what the question will require. In particular this seems to be at least part of the problem when they struggle to find a way to structure their answer, or they do not use information in the stem to guide them on what they should include in their answer.

- *It may be useful for tutors to remind students that bullet points are unlikely to provide enough information. To meet the standard required at M-level a good discussion is evaluative and shows insightfulness of the case study.*

This third point was discussed at a markers' meeting where there was quite a bit of concern about candidates needing to know that, at Level 7, they needed to produce more than just bullet points. Bullet points will be taken into account but are unlikely to receive many marks on their own. They are useful to set up the main issues to discuss, or if a candidate is running out of time. However, the very nature of bullet points, and their usefulness, tends to mean that they will be fairly 'short and sharp' and this is why they aren't enough on their own.

- *It may be worthwhile doing more around how to use theories to frame answers. They tend to expect to do it for SWOT and STEEPLE and so they prepare for these. A number need to make the leap into seeing a range of theories and how to apply them.*

Quite often candidates will struggle to use theoretical models successfully. It may be they see them as a set of headings, or a list of useful items. This can be understandable for those who do not see the link between research and theory. This might help to explain why the application of theory is something that many struggle with.

- *It may be useful to remind students that where a question asks them to select part of the model – as it does here – then to do more than that is using valuable time on work that cannot be credited.*

This final observation is self-explanatory. I do have sympathy for those candidates who see something in a question that they know about, and then leap to put pencil to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and write 'all I know about' feeling quite sure that it will impress the marker and lead to a good grade.

Finally, I wish all of you, CIPD tutors and students, good fortune and a good future as we continue to work under difficult conditions -and with many no doubt taking over the kitchen table or the spare bedroom, in order to keep on working. Students will be finding this a challenging and uncertain time during which to study in order to pursue a career in HR. Those who are already in HR will already be working with the challenges that the pandemic has brought HR. Through it all, it is always heartening to see that so many students continue to study for their professional qualification and that CIPD tutors give their time and commitment in helping them join the community that is the CIPD membership.

Dr Sue Speakman (Chief Examiner HRC)
and on behalf of the CIPD Team of Examiners

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

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