Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification

Human Resource Management in Context

May 2015

26 May 2015   09:50 – 13:00 hrs

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

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

Please write clearly and legibly.

Questions may be answered in any order.

Equal marks are allocated to each section of the paper.

Within Section B equal marks are allocated to each question.

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

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

You will fail the examination if:

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

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.

Until recently Cardwell Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (CHFT) provided mental healthcare services to six local authorities. But two years ago, it merged with three other NHS providers of community healthcare. This resulted in a doubling of its workforce, making CHFT the largest provider of mental healthcare in its area.

With changes in its external and internal contexts, the Trust has used a number of indicators to help identify options for reviewing its strategic direction over the next five years. Led by the Director of Corporate Affairs and Director of Human Resources and Workforce Development, the Senior Management Team (SMT) has analysed the current position of the organisation in relation to mental healthcare, as well as its competitive position in the healthcare sector.

Using a stakeholder analysis, the Trust has identified 10 external stakeholders who are key players in strategy development in the organisation. Their needs have to be met in a number of ways. Service-users, for example, want the service to meet their expectations, where good quality is of critical importance to them. Commissioners of mental healthcare are a main source of income for the Trust, so they expect a service which is fit for purpose and cost effective. There are five internal stakeholders. Of these, the mental health workforce is a key party to strategy development. It is their knowledge and skills which provide a quality service to users and healthcare commissioners. The workforce also makes up a large element in the Trust budget, so it must be capable of delivering any chosen strategy cost-effectively.

A STEEPLE analysis suggests the political context is likely to impact heavily on strategy development over the next few years. This includes the search for cost efficiencies and value for money in mental healthcare provision. The economic context means it is very important the Trust motivates and engages its staff in a time of austerity. CHFT must also be able to measure quality of healthcare provision effectively. Factors in the socio-cultural context include responding appropriately to local and national healthcare provision and satisfying the expectations of local communities.

Porter's five forces model demonstrates the power of buyers is low to moderate, although it is possible that some smaller organisations could provide cheaper services. This could be attractive to certain buyers. Threat of new entrants is medium to high, with some smaller companies and neighbouring trusts possibly wanting some of CHFT's business. Competitive rivalry is moderate.

A SWOT review reveals the internal strengths of the Trust to include: a high-skill workforce; a wide range of accessible services to local communities; and good information systems. Its internal weaknesses are: not all staff are fully engaged with performance measurement; some areas of mental health provision still have poor feedback; and some members of staff need to up-skill their use of technology. The external opportunities include: extending existing services to neighbouring communities; entering new markets such as provision of social care; and wider development of staff skills and competences to enhance specialist services. There is also a possibility of using technology to enhance current provision and

reduce costs. The main external threat is other providers of health care, such as local NHS trusts. These could penetrate the market for mental healthcare and other services.

Drawing on Ansoff's Strategy Development Matrix, the SMT has discarded the diversification option due to the high risks involved. Three other options have been identified as possible preferred organisational strategy choices. But each strategy needs further evaluation.

1) Market penetration. This protects and builds on existing products and services within existing markets. CHFT has a large market share of mental healthcare provision locally, so growth of its existing portfolio would generate further income within the existing market.

2) Product development. This requires developing new products in existing markets, by building on existing staff competencies and developing new competencies for supporting new care provision.

3) Market development. This builds on existing markets and penetrates new markets with existing and new products and services.

An evaluation of the above strategy options needs to be undertaken by the SMT, taking account of the stakeholders involved. Options are to be assessed using criteria of suitability, acceptability and feasibility. Suitability assesses whether the option fits into the wider purposes of CHFT in terms of its stakeholders, expectations of stakeholders and contexts of the organisation. Acceptability assesses expected outcomes such as profitability (or cost effectiveness) and stakeholder satisfaction. Feasibility assesses whether the option will work in practice, if it can be resourced and how it impacts on the Trust.

As an external consultant, you have been asked by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to write a report covering the following issues. You are expected to draw on relevant research and current practice to inform your response.

1. **Identify UP TO THREE external stakeholders and UP TO THREE internal stakeholders within the Trust. Explain why these groups are important in strategy development and discuss their likely influence on the development of organisational strategy in CHFT as a single business unit.**

2. **Critically review the three strategic options identified by the SMT and recommend which one to adopt, where workforce issues are a critical success factor. Justify your choice.**

3. **Critically analyse the HR implications of your preferred strategy for the organisation.**

4. **Identify and critically review UP TO THREE technological trends and UP TO THREE social and/or demographic trends that are likely to impact on the chosen business strategy of CHFT in the medium term.**

   It is recommended you spend 25% of your time on each of Tasks 1, 2, 3 and 4.

___

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. You have received the following email from a new managerial colleague who works with you in a local authority organisation.

    'As you know, I've just joined this local authority in the legal department, following my previous employment in a private bank. I'm finding it very difficult settling in. This is because in some ways these two types of organisation appear to be different from each other and this affects the ways people work in them.

    i.   Tell me **up to three** similarities between public organisations and private businesses and **up to three** differences.

         AND

    ii. Explain why the differences are important for each type of organisation.'

    Drawing upon research, draft your reply.

OR

2. Classical studies of organisations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided different models of management and organisation. These were aimed at helping managers understand the structures and dynamics of work organisations in order to establish order and control within them.

    i.   Summarise the main features of any **one** named school of classical organisation theory and critically evaluate it.

         AND

    ii. Critically assess the extent to which your organisation demonstrates or does not demonstrate any features of this named school of organisation theory. Justify your answer.

4

B

3. Power, authority and influence are key concepts in management theory and practice. They are the means by which managers attempt to control and direct organisations.

     i.   Drawing upon research and/or current practice, distinguish between each of these three concepts in managerial practice.

     AND

     ii.   Using examples, critically review how power, authority and influence are used by senior managers in your organisation as means of control.

OR

4. You have been sent the following email by a senior colleague in your organisation.

'I hear the term "psychological contract" being used regularly in managerial discussions but don't really understand what it means. Please:

     i.   Explain what the psychological contract is.

     AND

     ii.   Tell me how it is or is not relevant to our organisation.'

Drawing upon research, reply to this email.

C

5. There is some debate in the economic literature about the key features of liberal market economies such as the UK and Ireland. You have been asked to brief an overseas colleague coming to work in the UK on the following two issues.

    i. Drawing upon research, describe and review the essential features of the UK's liberal market economy.

        AND

    ii. Discuss the main consequences of the liberal market economic model for the UK labour market.

OR

6. Recent research argues that the occupational structure of the labour markets is continuing to evolve and change, with implications for organisations, people entering the labour force, and government.

    i. Drawing upon research, identify **up to three** major trends in the changing occupational structure of a labour market in a country of your choice that are likely to happen by 2020.

        AND

    ii. Critically review how these trends are likely to affect your organisation.

D

7. You have been asked to give a talk to a group of final year students at the local sixth-form college.

    The title of your talk is 'Globalisation: its main features and how organisations and consumers respond to it.'

    Drawing upon research, draft your talk.

OR

8. There are a number of well established major international organisations (such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) which seek to influence patterns of international trade, national economic policies and economic development.

    Select any **one** of these organisations and, drawing on research, describe its principal functions and critically evaluate its role in the global economy.

PLEASE TURN OVER

E

9. It is generally recognised that there has been increased use of employment regulation in the UK economy over the past 40 years.

    i.   Account for the increase in the quantity of employment legislation introduced by UK governments over this period of time.
         AND

    ii. Outline any one piece of UK employment legislation and critically review it.

OR

10. Drawing upon examples, argue the cases for and against **EITHER** businesses **OR** workers having organised pressure groups that try to influence public policy-making on behalf of their members.

                                              END OF EXAMINATION

Human Resource Management in Context

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

BLANK PAGE

Human Resource Management in Context

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

Introduction

This report reviews the May 2015 sitting of the Human Resource Management in Context advanced level examination of the CIPD. This is a core module within the advanced level qualifications framework and draws upon the "Insights, Strategy and Solutions" professional area of the CIPD Profession Map.

In this examination in the field, 450 candidates took the unit. Of these, 321 achieved a pass standard or more, giving a pass rate of 71.4 %. The breakdown of grades is shown below.

May 2015		
Grade	Number	Percentage of total (to 1 decimal point)
Distinction	9	2.0
Merit	69	15.3
Pass	243	54
Marginal fail	17	3.8
Fail	112	24.9
Total	**450**	**100.00**

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

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

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

Section A

Learning outcomes: 3 and 6

This section consisted of a seen case study with four questions, where candidates were expected to answer all questions. The case study organisation was a NHS foundation trust, providing mental healthcare services in its geographic area.

The case study touched on a number of issues covered in the module's learning outcomes. However, it was particularly intended to test in-depth knowledge and understanding of Learning outcomes 3 and 6.

10

Human Resource Management in Context

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2015

There are a number of ways in which this case can be approached but the following summary points could be examined and developed in answers.

Task 1

This asked candidates to identify up to three external stakeholders and up to three internal stakeholders within the case-study organisation, explain why these groups are important in strategy development, and discuss their likely influence on the development of organisational strategy in CHFT as a single business unit.

The main external stakeholders of CHFT are: service-users/patients; carers; commissioners; GPs/referrers; local communities; voluntary organisations; advocacy services; local councils; Care Quality Commission (CQC); Mental Act Commission (MHC). The main internal stakeholders are: the mental healthcare workforce; other workgroups; senior management team (SMT), directors; governance team; performance team. All these groups are important in strategy development, since they have stakes, albeit with different degrees of power and influence, in the development of an effective and efficient organisational strategy. But some groups, such as the SMT with its leadership responsibilities, carry more weight than others and they have more influence in the process of strategy development. As a public-sector organisation with a multiplicity of informed stakeholders, strategy development in CHFT is likely to be a consultative, incremental and consensus-building process, which takes place over a period of time, with a wide focus. The strongest external influence on strategy development is likely to come from service-users, commissioners and the CQC/MHC. Internally, the change makers are the SMT, directors, and mental healthcare workforce such as clinicians, including the professional bodies representing them. The emphasis is likely to be a consultative, reflective and developmental one that gives all parties a stake and contribution in the strategy development process.

Many responses to this task were generally good in terms of choosing suitable internal and external stakeholders. Besides understanding the differences, these were usually well explained but sometimes this meant the answers were largely descriptive. The majority of candidates failed to evaluate the stakeholders in terms of power, legitimacy, urgency, predictability, or level of interest. And of those candidates who identified a model, some failed to apply it. Only the very best candidates mentioned anything to do with how these stakeholders needed to be managed.

Task 2

This required candidates to critically review the three strategic options identified in the case and to recommend which one to adopt, where workforce issues are a critical success factor. Candidates were also required to justify their choice.

There is no preferred solution to this question but the following indicative factors can be taken into account in coming to a decision. With Option 1, suitability: recognition that the external and internal contexts are well-known to CHFT, such as existing relationships with commissioners, but negotiating with them could be problematic. This is due to underfunding, so an expansion of the workforce is necessary to address the widening portfolio issue.

Acceptability: needs to take account of the financial risks of expanding the workforce and service portfolio if not fully funded by the commissioners. Cost-benefit analysis is necessary to support this strategy. Expectations of the stakeholders vary, with commissioners more cautious than service-users and carers. Feasibility: a risk with underfunding and the possible impact on patient care by not expanding the existing workforce to meet needs of clients and commissioners. Performance and quality are likely to be affected.

With Option 2, suitability: recognition CHFT has a wide portfolio of provision. The biggest gap in provision relates to the workforce needs arising from the expansion of services. Acceptability: expectations of stakeholders that this client-group should be catered for locally. But there could be reluctance to provide full funding for this. Might be offset by reducing out-of-area placements but difficult to negotiate. This option is likely to raise CHFT's profile nationally if it is successful. Acceptability: recognises it needs higher funding to support it. This requires a more skilled workforce by either buying in or specialist training or sourcing of expert staff externally.

In Option 3, suitability: accepts CHFT is in strong position to develop into the social care market. Workforce is multi-disciplinary with joint-funded posts with local authorities. Current economic context impacts on social services. Has competent workforce with minimal need for skills growth. Acceptability: social care would generate government funding to support this strategy. Stakeholders are likely to view this favourably; supports a holistic approach and is cost-effective. Local authorities are likely to view favourably too. Feasibility: economies of scale likely to make option manageable. Expansion of staff is likely to be cost-effective.

Most of the answers were very good. A popular choice of option was market penetration; this was a 'stick with the knitting' strategy because it involved less risk and funding. It would also allow time for the mergers to become embedded and time to deal with disengaged staff and improving technological skills. The weaker answers were very basic, with little evaluation of the options and no justification for the strategy chosen. In general, the three options identified were well considered and recommendations on which to adopt were justified well. Poor performers tended to provide brief justification without considering workforce issues in sufficient depth.

Task 3

This asked candidates to critically analyse the HR implications of their preferred strategy for the organisation.

The HR implications of the preferred option cover a range of issues. These include recruitment and selection, learning and development, performance management, and redundancy and re-deployment. Any or some of these could be explored and debated by candidates in responding to this question.

Commonly, two types of answers were identified here. First, there were those that considered a number of HR functions and sought to identify the implications of each. Second, more strategic approaches considered the impact of the chosen strategy on the organisation and workforce issues. Either was deemed appropriate and marked accordingly. On the other hand, this task also generated some disappointing responses from advanced-level candidates. These answers ranged from some basic and generic operational

implications, many of which were not linked to the chosen strategy. More competent answers, on the other hand, adopted a more strategic approach and these candidates were able to explain the bigger picture in terms of HR's input to the development of a specific strategy.

Task 4

This asked candidates to identify and critically review up to three technological trends and up to three social trends that are likely to impact on the chosen business strategy of trust in the medium term.

Up to any three technological trends and three social trends could be discussed and reviewed by candidates. Technological trends may relate to managerial control, organisational systems, HR systems, operational systems, information technology, and medical technology. Social trends include demographic, attitudinal, spatial, immigration, public-service ones, and so on.

This was quite a demanding task and, as in the first one, many candidates felt they needed to identify three of each trend, despite the question being worded as 'up to' three options. These candidates are rarely confident enough to do less than three. Therefore in many cases, the trends were not generally addressed in any detail, often appearing as a list or in bullet point format. Other candidates were able to identify a range of technological and social or demographic trends, but many of them failed to critically review how these trends were likely to impact their chosen strategy.

In summary, it was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates had, to varying degrees, prepared for the case. The stronger scripts saw candidates able to engage with the context of the case-study organisation and offer well considered strategic evaluations and justified responses. However, there were others who seemed to have brought pre-prepared answers into the examination room but with little or no insight into or understanding of the case-study organisation under discussion.

Section B

In this section, candidates had to choose one question out of two in each of five sub-sections that covered the remaining learning objectives not examined in the Section A case study. Most questions consisted of more than one part and candidates were expected to attempt all parts in each question.

Question A1

Learning outcome: 1

This question asked candidates to reply to an email and explain up to three similarities between public organisations and private businesses and up to three differences, as well as explaining why the differences are important for each type of organisation.

According to writers such as Van Der Wal et al (2008) and others, there are both similarities and differences between public organisations and private businesses. The similarities include their needs for accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, reliability and expertise. The main differences include accountability in the public sector is to politicians and the law, whereas accountability in the private sector is mainly to shareholders. Public organisations typically stress the importance of lawfulness, incorruptibility and impartiality, whereas private businesses typically stress the importance of profitability, honesty and innovation. These differences are important because they affect the ways in which those employed in the two types of organisations work and behave and the ways in which citizens and customers are treated. Other differences may be identified by candidates and markers are expected to use their professional judgement whether these are appropriate or not to the question set.

Most candidates who passed did so by providing a reasonable answer to the first part of the question. Generally, the differences and similarities were understood but commonly answers to the second part were weaker. A few candidates were able to identify cultural differences and patterns of working, particularly in the public sector where there remains a union presence. Equally, some working in the public sector discussed a narrowing of the differences, notably that roles of the two sectors may have modified with some private-sector organisations now being the model employer.

Question A2

Learning outcome: 1

This question asked candidates to summarise the main features of any one named school of classical organisation theory and critically evaluate it. They also had to critically assess the extent to which their organisation demonstrates or does not demonstrate any features of this named school of organisation theory and to justify their answer.

Candidates could select any one of the main classical theories of management and organisation such as bureaucracy, scientific management, and the human relations school (epitomised by Weber, Taylor and Mayo). They could then describe and critically evaluate it. Drawing on current practice, they then needed to demonstrate and assess the extent to which their organisation has adopted or not adopted this classical theory of organisations and why.

There were some good answers here. Bureaucracy was the theory most favoured and usually described well, followed by a critique usually consisting of its inflexibility and resistance to change and slowness in responding to competition. For some candidates, their answers could have contained more commentary on the way employees are treated. Strangely, few candidates were able to provide a decent description of human relations theory and within this approach how employees are treated. Answers to the second part of the question were generally good. Reviews mainly consisted of a hybrid between mechanistic and organic organisations or that candidate organisations did not follow the bureaucratic approach at all.

Question B3

Learning outcome: 2

This question asked candidates to draw upon research and current practice and distinguish between the concepts of power, authority and influence in managerial practice. Using examples, they then had to critically review how power, authority and influence are used by senior managers in their organisation as a means of control.

Power takes several forms (legitimate, reward, coercive) but it is basically the ability of an individual or group to shape, frame or direct the actions of others in organisations. But mostly power is perceived as authority which is accepted use of power by those having it. Authority attaches to the person in the position, not the persons themselves. Influence is the attempt to modify the behaviour of others through mobilising power to one's own purposes.

All three concepts of power, authority and influence are closely linked and they are critical to understanding organisational life and how people at all levels act and behave in organisations. Candidates were required to draw on examples demonstrating how power, authority and influence are applied in their organisations by senior management and critically review them.

This was not a popular question and not particularly well answered in a number of cases. Some candidates drew upon French and Raven but were unable to use the model to explain the differences between the three concepts. The quality of the second part of the answer was heavily influenced by how well the concepts were understood.

Other candidates were more competent at distinguishing between the concepts of power, authority and influence than they were at critically reviewing how these were used by managers in their own organisation. Although the question asked for research, few candidates were able to identify relevant theory.

Question B4

Learning outcome: 2

This question asked candidates to explain what the psychological contract is and how it is or is not relevant to their own organisation.

There is no definitive explanation of the psychological contract. But basically it refers to the sets of beliefs individuals hold regarding the promises made amongst themselves for their common interests. For employees, it is concerned with the individual's subjective beliefs and for employers, the expectations they provide employees with in the wage-work bargain.

Importantly, since psychological contracts represent differences in the ways managers and workers interpret promises and commitments with each other, both parties have differences regarding specific terms of this contract. However, a major feature of the psychological contract is the concept of mutuality. This involves concepts of pay, work, loyalty, trust, fairness, commitment, flexibility, security and career enhancement. The second part of the question related to candidates' own organisations.

15

This was a popular question on a well known topic area, but the standard of answers was generally disappointing. Very few candidates referenced any theory and many were unable to identify the key features of the psychological contract. Some candidates appeared to be guessing and a lot of answers contained fundamental errors and omissions.

A number of candidates struggled to define the psychological contract and some candidates confused it with the implied terms of the contract of employment. Candidates who mentioned expectations commonly failed to include examples demonstrating their knowledge. Even stronger candidates who were able to clearly define the psychological contract, with examples, struggled to explain its relevance in the second part of the question. Many candidates merely claimed it was relevant but without explaining why, such as the business implications of a strong versus weak psychological contract.

Question C5

Learning outcome: 4

This question asked candidates to draw upon research, describe and review the essential features of the UK's liberal market economy and to discuss the main consequences of the liberal market economic model for the UK labour market.

The liberal market economy (LME) of the UK, in contrast to the European social model, is characterised by a number of features. These include: the rule of the market by opening up trade, freedom of movement for capital, goods and services; reducing wages by de-unionisation, and limiting workers' rights; cutting public expenditure, especially social expenditure on education, health care and low-cost housing; de-regulation by reducing regulation on safety at work, the eco-environment and business 'red tape'; privatisation by selling state enterprises and assets, including utilities, telecommunications, transport, schools, universities and transferring ownership to private individuals or shareholders for profit; and eliminating the concept of the 'public good', replacing it with individual responsibility and private provision. The main consequences of the LME for the UK labour market include: a free market for labour; weak trade union organisations; a stronger right to manage; competitive labour markets; larger wage differentials; global movements in labour migration; and de-recognition of trade unions.

This question was attempted by a small number of candidates but most of them did so successfully. It was that clear those who attempted it understood the concept and briefly explained the consequences of a liberal market economy on the labour market. Responses to the second part of the question, however, were weak by most candidates, with little or no research included in their responses.

Question C6

Learning outcome: 4

This question asked candidates - drawing upon research - to identify up to three major trends in the changing occupational structure of the UK labour market that are likely to

16

happen by 2020. They then had to critically review how these trends are likely to affect their organisation.

There are various typologies of major trends in the changing occupational structure. One, for example, suggests increases in: caring and personal services (dental nurses); social care associate professionals (social workers, probation officers); health professionals (pharmacists, medical practitioners); media (journalists, writers); company managers (senior executives, middle managers); cultural and sporting professionals (actors, dancers, photographers); leisure occupations (sports coaches, hairdressers); property-related services (estates managers, developers); customer services (tele-sales, retailers); and business services (insurance, accounting). Choices of these occupational changes needed to be related to the candidates' organisations.

This was a very straightforward question, and one for which candidates could have potentially achieved a high grade. In practice, however, some candidates misinterpreted the words 'occupational structure' of the labour market and focused their answers on social and demographic trends. This meant their marks were lower than they might have been. Some marks were awarded, if candidates then related these to some occupational change. Higher marks were awarded to those that directly answered the question set and were able to include research- based evidence to support the highlighted trends.

Question D7

Learning outcome: 5

This question asked candidates to draft a talk on globalisation: its main features and how organisations and consumers respond to it, drawing upon research.

There are many ways that globalisation is ordered and structured. One approach is in terms of: global finance; global agriculture; global manufacturing; global tourism; and global tele-working. Each can be developed more fully, though there are other ways of approaching this part of the question. The ways that organisations respond to globalisation include: addressing competitive pressures in product and labour markets; trying to increase market share; searching for more and better products; investing in ICTs; taking over other businesses. Consumer responses to globalisation include: taking advantage of greater consumer choice; consumer sovereignty challenging producer sovereignty; and consumers becoming more selective how they spend their household incomes and wages.

Globalisation seems to be a topic that is covered well by most centres. This question was one of the most popular on the paper and most candidates earned a pass or better. The minority that failed were unable to provide a reasonable definition of the concept and an adequate description of its main features. The main weakness in most answers was lack of an appropriate structure. Several answers presented a critique of globalisation and therefore the answer was not written in a way which clearly demonstrated the reactions of producers and consumers to it. In some instances, these reactions were inferred and so given the benefit of the doubt. Answers that considered the pros and cons of globalisation scored low or no marks, as this was not the question set.

Question D8

Learning outcome: 5

This question asked candidates to select any one international organisation and, drawing on research, describe its principal functions and critically evaluate its role in the global economy.

Any one international body, such as OECD, World Bank, ILO; IMF; and WTO, could be selected, outlined and discussed. Their aims, programmes and policies then needed to be reviewed and evaluated.

Relatively few students answered this question but those who did were able to write confidently about one organisation and its role. The topic of international organisations appears to be one which is given much less attention by many centres. The IMF seemed the most popular of the institutions to discuss. But in some cases, despite its high profile in the recent Greek debt crisis, descriptions of the IMF's functions were limited, as was any attempt at providing a critique of its role. The arguments related mainly to its positive aims and objectives, with some critical evaluation.

Question E9

Learning outcome: 7

This question asked candidates to account for the increase in the quantity of employment legislation by UK governments, over a period of 40 years, and to outline any one piece of UK employment legislation and critically review it.

Employment regulation has been extended widely in the UK for over 50 years. The reasons for this include: the increasing legal complexity of the employment relationship and contract of employment – these are aimed at regulating and controlling the conflicting demands of employers and workers in the labour market. Other factors include the relative demise of trade unionism in the UK labour market; growth of employment rights in the workplace; the role of Europe in extending workers' rights in the labour market; and the increasing importance of the law in regulating the employment relationship. Any single piece of employment relations may be identified and critically examined.

Candidate choice of question in this section of the examination was evenly split between the two questions. In general, answers to this question were weaker compared with those to Question E10. Surprisingly, the main weakness in most responses was the inability of candidates to provide enough plausible reasons for the introduction of so much employee protection legislation. Few accounted for the increasing importance of the role of the law in regulating employment relations. Also quite a number of candidates failed to mention the emerging volume of law from the EU. The most frequent plausible reason given was the decline in union power but too often this issue was argued at length at the expense of additional arguments. There were some dubious reasons offered, such as that the laws on discrimination have emerged as a result of the rise in immigration. Most answers to the second part of the question were better, where the popular choice was the Equality Act.

Unfortunately, not many candidates were able to provide a critical review of the law they had chosen. Many answers were weak and related mainly to a description of the law, which was sometimes followed by a brief indication of its positive intentions.

Question E10

Learning outcome: 7

This question asked candidates to draw upon examples and argue the cases for and against either businesses or workers having organised pressure groups to try and influence public policy-making on behalf of their members.

The cases for and against business/worker pressure groups are similar. Examples could be provided in answers. The case for businesses/workers having organised pressure groups are: they enable these groups to participate in the policy making process; they provide a vital link between government and their members' interests; pressure groups are able to use their expertise to provide the government with important information; pressure groups make governments more responsive to the wishes of the business/worker communities, especially in between elections; and pressure groups are able to express the views of minority groups in the community who might not otherwise receive a hearing.

The case against pressure groups include: they may represent a powerful minority force in society and exert political influence to the detriment of the majority of society; some pressure groups exert influence because of their financial position, membership or organisation - this influence may be out of proportion to their position in society; direct action by pressure groups (for example, strikes by unions, demonstrations, blockades, pickets) can cause hardship to the community in general; some pressure groups are not democratic – they have powerful, but unrepresentative leaders who may not be representative of anyone but themselves; and some leaders do not reflect the opinions of their organisation's member.

Answers to this question were generally weak, with a substantial proportion of candidates having insufficient knowledge of pressure groups to answer the question effectively. The majority of answers discussed the benefits of these groups as the ability to influence government policy. Too many answers were one-sided. Rarely was there much discussion of the case against, with some candidates drawing attention to issues such as ethical ones and the excess power of some groups to undermine democracy.

Conclusion

The pass rate in this examination diet was 71.4%. The marking team is of the view that this examination paper provided a good test of all the learning objectives and the indicative content of this unit, and it was a fair test of candidate knowledge and understanding within the module.

1. There was a good proportion of pass scripts in this examination but, as this is an M-level examination, candidates are expected to provide evidence-based answers to the questions set, drawing upon relevant research and good practice of HRM in its contexts. This means that they are expected to read around the subject matter of this

module. At a minimum, basic texts provide an overview of the literature and identify and review key studies in this field of professional knowledge and understanding. But this is not enough and it needs to be supplemented through wider reading by candidates. These sources include relevant academic journals, professional periodicals and the quality press.

2.   Most candidates seem to prepare effectively for the case study, with some of them apparently being helped by their tutors on what sorts of topics could be expected in the examination paper. But candidates are advised not to 'question spot'. Common problems are the usual ones: failure to answer the question set, lack of references to the case and properly contextualised answers, and answers in note form and/or bullet points. These invariably fail to convey sufficient knowledge and understanding of the questions or topics being responded to.

3.   In the case study, answers to Tasks 1 and 2 were generally better than those to Tasks 3 and 4. Stronger scripts saw candidates able to engage with the contexts of the case organisation and offer well considered strategic evaluations and justified responses.

4.   There were a range of straightforward HR questions included in Section B of the paper and it was pleasing to note a number of candidates performed well and achieved high grades on these. Other candidates continued to fail to provide clear direct answers to the questions set.

5.   The answers provided to the questions in Section B emphasise the importance of candidates reading and digesting all parts of the question set. There were examples where candidates underperformed on some Section B questions as a result of either misinterpretation (deliberate or otherwise) or failing to address all parts of the question.

6.   Responses in Section B were commonly weaker than in Section A and this proved to be the downfall for candidates achieving borderline passes in the case study. It appears that most candidates are now preparing well for the case study, probably at the expense of checking their understanding of topics across the breadth of the syllabus required for Section B. Weaker answers lacked a proper focus on the question set and some were based on very spurious information whose origins were doubtful. Candidates need to engage with the literature to be able to raise their game in Section B, especially regarding research evidence and good practice.

7.   Generally, performance in Section B requiring reviews or critiques was not always good. Some candidates continue not to understand the need to refer to research in their answers. There is a need for more balanced answers in some cases.

8.   Performance in Section B of the examination was, on the whole, disappointing but, despite this, the tail of weak scripts wasn't as lengthy as it is sometimes, as many candidates secured a pass or better overall. Some candidates appear to be challenged by questions which involve knowledge and understanding of employment relations, the law, economics or politics. Some of these areas can be avoided by candidates but this is a weak strategy, since it is not possible to deal with the 7HRC examination without encountering some questions where this knowledge needs to be

demonstrated and applied. One questions whether the 'harder' aspects of the indicative content are taught as fully in some programmes as they should be.

9.   Overall, the pass rate is encouraging. There is clear evidence that some candidates are preparing well for the examination and they can demonstrate their ability to show knowledge at M level standard. But the importance of including research wherever possible should be noted, together with the need for a greater level of critical evaluation and justification. Weaker candidates are still not considering the wider business context or thinking strategically.

To conclude, I would like to acknowledge once again the efforts of my team of markers for contributing to the smooth operation of the assessment process on this occasion. The markers were Derek Adam-Smith, John Ashcroft, Helen Bessant, Chris Evans, Dee McGhee, Alan Peacock and Amanda Thompson.

Professor David Farnham
Chief examiner