

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification
**Human Resource Management in
Context**
January 2019

Date: 22 January 2019 Time: 09:50 – 13:00

**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.

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.

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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.

You are the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Total HR Solutions (THRS). THRS is an established human resources (HR) solutions provider (located in the UK or in any other named country of your choice), which provides a range of services to its clients. These include: all types of staffing; business process outsourcing; recruitment process outsourcing; vendor management systems; career transition services; talent development services; change management solutions; leadership development programmes; and career development programmes. With a workforce of 500, THRS has a solid reputation amongst its clients, sound business performance, and a rounded portfolio of work. But local competition is getting tougher.

As CEO, you have recently received an informal approach from Global HR Solutions (GHRS), a company which supplies similar services to THRS to international clients, with a view to considering a merger between the two businesses. GHRS provides staffing services, workforce management services, and career transition services to businesses primarily in France, North America, and South-East Asia. It has headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and employs more than 1,000 people.

As CEO, you have commissioned a confidential review of GHRS's activities and business performance. Some key indicators are listed below.

The main features of GHRS include:

- It operates in 10 geographical segments: France, Italy, Japan, North America, the UK, Ireland, Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands.
- It operates through three businesses: general staffing (office and industrial); professional staffing (information technology, engineering and technical, finance and legal, and medical and science); and HR solutions (career transition and talent development, managed service programmes, recruitment outsourcing, and vendor management systems).
- GHRS is a leader in a fragmented market, giving it a competitive advantage across several regions. This enhances its brand image, pricing power, and ability to gain market share. Consolidation is increasing competition in the industry, which may lead to loss of market share amongst existing players.

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- Its presence in several countries enables GHRS to withstand the risks associated with specific markets. Diversified geographic presence limits the company's exposure to risks in its markets and provides GHRS with stable growth opportunities.
- GHRS has an incremental growth strategy to supplement existing businesses and expand into new geographic areas. By recently acquiring Multi-national Capital Solutions, a market leader in Australia, which is involved in career transition, talent and leadership development, and recruitment services, GHRS aims to combine this acquisition with a subsidiary which is a global leader in career transition and talent mobility. GHRS's robust incremental growth model complements its services portfolio and boosts its geographical presence.
- GHRS is one of the largest providers of staffing solutions globally. The Company connects more than 6,500 associates in 60 countries and territories around the world. The strong outlook for the global employment services market provides incremental growth opportunities to enhance its top-line performance.
- GHRS will also benefit from an explosive growth in the market for global recruitment process outsourcing (RPO). It offers RPO solutions to companies which outsource their recruitment process for permanent employees. When doing this, it takes care of the whole or part of the process or acts as a partner for all permanent recruitment needs.
- GHRS derives a major portion of its revenues from temporary staffing. The Company's leading market position across several regions around the world will enable it to tap into positive trends in this market.
- GHRS has consistently reported a low return on equity (ROE), compared with its peers. ROE measures how much the shareholders earn for their investment in the company. A lower ROE indicates the Company is inefficiently using shareholders' money and is not generating higher returns.
- The global HR services market is highly fragmented and the competitive landscape varies by country. According to industry estimates, there are almost 250,000 registered private employment agencies worldwide, with a high degree of fragmentation in the US, Japan, and the UK. Moreover, competition from internet-based sources has increased.

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- The temporary employment industry is highly regulated in many countries where the Company operates. Changes in laws or government regulations may result in prohibition or restriction of certain types of employment services the Company is permitted to offer. The imposition of new or additional licensing or tax requirements may reduce its revenues and earnings.
- Demand for staffing services is significantly affected by the general level of economic activity and employment in the US and other countries where the Company operates. Significant swings in economic activity have historically had disproportionate impacts on staffing industry volumes.

These and related issues will be discussed at the next Board Meeting of THRS.

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As Adviser to the CEO of Total HR Solutions, provide written responses to each of the following questions in preparation for the next Board Meeting of the Company, drawing on research and current practice.

1. Taking account of the extracts from the confidential review of the activities and business performance of Global HR Solutions (GHR), argue the case FOR and the case AGAINST Total HR Solutions agreeing to merge with GHR.
2. Using Porter's five-forces model (bargaining power of buyers, bargaining power of suppliers, threat of new entrants to the industry, threat of substitute products, and intensity of rivalry amongst existing competitors), provide a robust analysis of the level of competition in the HR solutions industry in the country where THRS operates. Justify your answer.
3. If a merger takes place between the two businesses, what forms of support from national governments would the new global organisation be looking for in the countries where it operates?
4. If a merger takes place between the two businesses, critically examine UP TO THREE Human Resources Management (HRM) issues that the new merged organisation will have to manage.

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

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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. Increasing interest has been shown in the role of stakeholders in organisations. All organisations have stakeholders but their roles differ between organisations, depending on the rules and the responsibilities of the organisation and the development of the organisation over time. Basically, stakeholders are any party to whom management pays attention in an organisation.
 - i) Drawing on research and current practice, identify and discuss the main stakeholders in your organisation.

AND

- ii) Critically evaluate Mitchell's et al (1997) typology of stakeholders, which classifies them in terms of their power to influence an organisation, their legitimacy in relationship to an organisation, and the urgency of their claim on an organisation.

OR

2. You have received the following email from a new junior colleague at work.

"Hello, please explain to me (a) what is meant by 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR) and why some organisations are putting CSR on their business agenda and (b) whether our organisation has a CSR policy, or not, and why this is the case."

Draft a helpful reply to this email, drawing on research and current practice.

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B

3. You have been asked to give a talk to a group of first-year university students in the locality where you work. The topic is: 'What managers typically do in the workplace.'
- Drawing on research **and** current practice, draft what you will say. Justify your answer.

OR

4. You have been asked to give a talk to a group of first-year university students in the locality where you work. The topic is: 'The contribution of the finance function to my organisation.'
- Drawing on current practice, draft what you will say. Justify your answer.

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5. Harney (2016) argues that 'whether strategy is formulaic and designed as per classical definitions or is more emergent or fluid' is one of the key fault lines in debates about strategy.
- i) Drawing on research and current practice, compare and contrast the main differences between the 'classical' or 'rational' approach to strategy formulation and implementation, and the 'emergent' approach.

AND

- ii) To what extent does management in your organisation adopt **EITHER** a classical **OR** an emergent approach to strategy and why?

OR

6. The resource-based view of the firm (RBVF) gained wide recognition in the early 1990s, by supporting the view that the key to competitive advantage in organisations rests internally with the firm. The underlying assumption of the RBVF is that performance within firms is attributable to how the firm manages its tangible and intangible resources.
- i) Critically review the RBVF, drawing on research **and** current practice.

AND

- ii) To what extent does your organisation base its HR strategy (or not base its HR strategy) on the resource-based model? Justify your answer.

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7. It is argued that diversity management is the strategy of using best practices to find and create a diverse and inclusive workplace. Equal opportunity, in contrast, is the policy of treating employees and others without discrimination, for example on the grounds of sex, race, or age.

i) Drawing on research, critique the differences between 'diversity management' and 'equal opportunity'.

AND

ii) Drawing on current practice, how does your organisation manage (or not manage) diversity and equal opportunity? Justify your answer.

OR

8. With ever-increasing pressure on the Human Resource Management (HRM) function to support strategic goals and to focus on providing added-value to businesses, organisations have increasingly used Information Technology (IT) to leverage their HRM activities.

Drawing on current practice, critically evaluate **UP TO THREE** areas where IT is contributing to the HRM function in your organisation.

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9. You have received the following email from a new work colleague.

“Hello, a substantial body of public opinion is of the view that our education system is not fulfilling the objective of preparing young people for work and employment. Do you think the above statement is a valid one to make?”

Draft an informed response to this email.

OR

10. Work and employment have become increasingly regulated by the state in recent years, because of concerns about national economic performance, fairness at work, and the changing labour market.

Select any **ONE** piece of employment law and critically evaluate its impact in your organisation.

END OF EXAMINATION

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Introduction

The January 2019 examination paper was the final paper from the late Professor David Farnham. We are indebted to him for his conscientious approach to writing examination questions; bringing subjects to life in a way that tested both the academic and practitioner skills. A summary of key points is below, followed by a question-by-question commentary on overall candidate performance.

At 70% the overall pass rate nudges very slightly above previous examination results. Overall, fails comprised thirty percent of the total candidates. With a significant proportion of these in the fail category (i.e. below forty-five percent). The proportion of Distinctions is consistent with the other core examination results. And the proportion of Merits and Passes is acceptable in terms of what one might expect from a standard distribution curve. It is the proportion of outright fails that tutors may want to reflect upon, in terms of the preparedness of some candidates for the depth of M level and the breadth of the syllabus.

| January 2019 | | |
|---------------|------------|---------------------|
| Grade | Number | Percentage of total |
| Distinction | 12 | 4 |
| Merit | 50 | 19 |
| Pass | 126 | 47 |
| Marginal fail | 33 | 12 |
| Fail | 48 | 18 |
| Total | 269 | 100 |

The paper tested some aspects of the syllabus that hadn't been examined in the last couple of years. Questions in these areas tended to be less well answered, as is noted below for Section A 3 and Section B 4, 6 and 7. Question 9 attracted personal opinion and descriptive accounts of the effectiveness, or otherwise, of education. Overall there were some good and some very good answers where candidates provided strong arguments based on clear evidence and effective cover of all parts of the question. Candidates with a sound knowledge of topics tended to write more confidently and clearly.

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Section A

Learning Outcomes:

LO4: understand, analyse and critically evaluate the market and competitive environments of organisations and how organisational leaders and the HR function respond to them.

LO5: understand, analyse and critically evaluate globalisation and international forces and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.

Candidates were much better placed to do well in the case study section where they had conducted research into the context of the case study organisation. There are easily identifiable organisations operating in this sector and research would have assisted with the general understanding of this market. Overall candidates related to the case study scenario well; however there is a considerable difference in performance when attempting individual questions. In summary: question 1 was well-answered; question 2 less so; question 3 had few really good answers; and question 4 had varied responses.

Task 1: The case for merger has a variety of benefits which include: in theory a merger aims to maximize shareholder wealth and some assessment of this needs to be made by the THRS board; merger could promote product diversification and investment diversification and reduce market risk; economies of scale reduce the costs of doing business; by merging with a firm like GHRS with operations in other countries, the new business could reduce its foreign exchange risks and the danger posed by localized recessions; larger businesses may have better access to sources of finance in capital markets than smaller firms; expansion resulting from merger may enable the recently enlarged firm to access debit and equity financing that had formerly been beyond its reach; and there may be tax and operational efficiencies of a merger. On the other hand, the risks of merger include loss of autonomy; things do not always work out as intended; the problems associated with managing large, MNCs where there are differences in culture and how things are done; and merger can lead to anti-competitive practices.

Task 2: There were some answers that struggled to apply Porters' five forces, confusing supplier and buyer. Overall the papers were of an acceptable standard. Porter's five forces are: bargaining power of buyers, bargaining power of suppliers, threat of new entrants to the industry, threat of substitute products, and intensity of rivalry amongst existing competitors. Taking each of these in turn, the following issues could be considered in candidate responses:

Bargaining power of buyers – where there are few buyers, they often control the market. Questions to be considered include: how powerful are the buyers, how many are there, can the buyers get costs down and, do they have the power to dictate terms?

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Bargaining power of suppliers – markets where there are few suppliers means suppliers retain the bargaining power. So, the questions to be considered here include: how many suppliers are in the market, are there a few who control prices, or many so prices are lower, do suppliers hold the power, and how easy is it to switch suppliers and what's the cost?

Threat of new entrants to the industry – the questions to be asked here include: what's the threat of new businesses starting in this sector, how easy is it to start up in this business, what are the rules and regulations, what finance would be needed to start-up, and are there barriers to entry which give THRS greater power?

Threat of substitute products/services – if there are available alternatives the threat of substitution increases. The questions to be asked here include: how easy is it to find an alternative to the service being provided, can it be outsourced or automated?

Intensity of competition among competitors – markets where there are few competitors are attractive but can be short-lived. These are highly competitive markets with many companies chasing the same work which reduces company power in the market. The questions to be asked here include: what is the level of competition in this sector, what's the competitor situation, with many competitors or few, are they in a commodity situation or competing with only a few competitors?

Task 3: The sorts of supportive government policies which would be attractive to the new business include the following: effective infrastructure, taxation levels, access to local markets, guaranteeing scientific and technological competence, state support in terms of regulatory, commercial, political and diplomatic issues, and reducing labour standards – each or any of these need to be explored in greater depth. For example, this would require governments where the business operates being willing to cover the costs of basic infrastructure, such as funding high-risk research, supporting universities and vocational training systems, promoting the dissemination of scientific information, and facilitating technology transfers. Each and any of these policies can be developed in candidate answers. Responses tended to identify a very limited set of ways government can support business, and to a rather superficial level.

Task 4: There are many HRM issues facing any new organisation after a merger takes place between businesses. If the merger between THRS and GHRM takes place, this could include the following: what to do with the present workforce of THRS, involving issues of retention, possible lay-offs and redundancy; workforce planning; recruitment and selection issues; the integration of HRM systems and policies, managing and integrating the different cultures of the two merged organisations, managing training and development issues; keeping employees informed of the changes taking place; communicating and consulting with staff; supporting those particularly affected by the merger; and managing possible conflicts and differences arising out of the merger.

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Section B

There was a wide range in the quality of answers. Good answers not only met all of the requirements of the questions but showed an ability to structure and assemble a well-evidenced answer. Some candidates did not appear to organise their time well, focusing heavily on the case study, leaving insufficient time to present well-constructed answers to Section B. There were some topics that had not been examined in recent diets and it may be that candidates had tended to focus on previous examination questions as a predictor of what might be asked this time. There were opportunities for stronger candidates to stretch themselves. Providing candidates with more development opportunities in the skills of analysis, evaluation and thoughtful justification would be helpful. It seems too, that some candidates are still not aware of the need to support their arguments with appropriate research evidence. Additionally, greater focus on the requirements to critically evaluate/examine and use research and current practice to structure answers when required will improve the grades of marginal candidates considerably.

Question A1

Learning Outcomes: LO1 understand, analyse and critically evaluate contemporary organisations and their principal environments.

This question is answered well with candidates demonstrating a sound understanding of stakeholder analysis and relating well to appropriate research evidence. However, a number struggled with the second part.

Some candidates critiqued their stakeholders whilst others critiqued Mitchell's model. Either approach was accepted. A number of candidates listed some stakeholders with little attempt to assess which had the most power so as to prioritise them; the answers implied that power between them was equivalent. Those that did not pass this question showed very little understanding of the typology and the thinking behind it.

In the first part of the question, candidates are expected to list and discuss the main stakeholders in their organisation. These are likely to include, wholly or partly, shareholders or the communities they serve (such as in local government), creditors, customers, employees, management, banking institutions, suppliers, trade unions, professional bodies, and government. Various typologies are identified in the literature, but the role stakeholders practically play in organisations depends partly on their legal status and partly on their power over the organisation. The organisation's system of governance plays a key function here and there are different models of corporate governance internationally. In the second part of the question, candidates are expected to draw on Mitchell's and others (1997) typology of stakeholders to examine their power, legitimacy and urgency in relation to claims on the organisation. This enables candidates to determine which stakeholders are 'latent', 'expectant', or 'definitive' within their organisation.

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Question A2

Learning outcomes: LO1 understand, analyse and critically evaluate contemporary organisations and their principal environments.

Candidates generally displayed a good understanding of CSR, often incorporating ethics as well as sustainability themes. The very capable candidates were able to demonstrate in part i) that organisations are developing CSR policies because they realise that the process has the benefit of enhancing the product brand, employer brand and the bottom line. Good answers were able to provide reasons for CSR appearing on the business agenda and a convincing justification for their own organisation's approach.

In the first part of this question, candidates needed to define corporate CSR and explain why some organisations are putting CSR on their business agendas. CSR builds on stakeholder theory and is where companies or organisations integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. The reason for some firms seeking to become more socially responsible is the growing perception amongst some people in the business community that sustainable business success and shareholder value cannot be achieved solely through maximising short-term profits. They believe it can be done through market-oriented yet responsible corporate behaviour. This means contributing to sustainable development by managing their operations in ways that enhance economic growth and increased competitiveness, whilst promoting social responsibility such as consumer interests, equitable employment practices, and environmental protection. In other words, CSR is not an optional extra to core business activities but is about how businesses are managed ethically. In the second part of the questions, candidates attempted to relate CSR policy to their own organisation and justify their answer.

Question B3

Learning outcome: LO2 understand, analyse and critically evaluate the managerial and business environment within which HR professionals work.

This proved to be one of the more popular questions on the examination paper. However, a number of answers lacked focus and consisted of a collection of theories and discussions regarding the role of a manager rather than 'what managers typically do'. Traditional management theories such as Taylor and Fayol appear to be well known and candidates were given full recognition for using these.

The study of management is fraught with semantic debates, varying perceptions of the management function within organisations, and a plethora of literature in the field. The key to providing a convincing argument in response to this question is for candidates to reflect on what managers actually do when working in their organisations. A variety of models provide frameworks for doing this such as Hales (2001), Mintzberg (1980), Drucker (1993) and Kotter (1982). These and other works commonly identify the complexity of managerial work, its fragmented nature, continual interactions with others, their networks of contacts, and the focus

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on day-to-day concrete problems. In practice, managers appear to spend relatively little time on strategic issues, tending to react to events rather than initiate them, are subject to constant interruptions, have un-scheduled and unplanned meetings, and they navigate rapidly between meetings and activities. Other ways of explaining how managers work in organisations, such as functional and specialist activities, are acceptable in answers, provided they draw on evidence and are justified.

Question B4

Learning outcome: LO2 understand, analyse and critically evaluate the managerial and business environment within which HR professionals work.

This was a straightforward question; nonetheless, many candidates answered it without a wide understanding of the strategic role of finance. Many of the answers were limited to the candidate's own experience of their finance department which was mainly day to day issues e.g. expenses and budgets with little on the more strategic issues.

The finance function is critical in all organisations. For an organisation to be effective and efficient, it is critical to have appropriate financial resources, the ability to evaluate capital projects, to keep proper accounting records, and to maintain firm budgetary control. Organisations need to have the correct amount of finance capital, fixed assets, working capital, and investment capital. Evaluation of capital projects involves estimating their future benefits and comparing these with costs. The annual accounts of an organisation provide the base information for those outside the company wishing to understand its financial standing. Minimum standards are set by legislation and accounts are audited to ensure these standards are met. The information required for statutory accounts has grown enormously in recent years, due to pressures from investors and the general public. A main preoccupation of senior managers is cash, so cash control is essential for effective financial management. Budgets are set for managers of cost centres, as agreed by them and their managers. In summary, planning, budgeting, management and control, and performance measurement are the core of the financial management function in organisations.

Question C5

Learning outcomes: L03 understand, analyse and critically evaluate how organisational and HR strategies are shaped and developed in response to internal and external environmental factors.

This proved to be a very popular question. However, a lot of answers to this question were descriptive rather than comparative. Although most candidates could outline what each approach entails, few were able to compare them in a meaningful way. More sophisticated answers could see that various sections of a very large organisation may be linked to different approaches.

The first part of this question asks candidates to compare and contrast the classical and emergent approaches to strategy. The rational approach provides textbook models of the strategy process involving analysing the contexts of the business, analysing its resources,

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providing a vision, mission and statement of the firm's goals, and then setting out strategic options. From this, one has to be chosen and implemented. It's a sequential model of strategy, which emphasises the scientific approach to strategic decision-making, which is the outcome of objective analysis and planning. The emergent approach in contrast is that there is no single and definitive objective of strategy and it develops or 'emerges' over time. The test for emergent strategy is to examine how strategy develops in practice, and changes over time. The second part of this question asks candidates to assess whether, based on evidence, managers in their organisation adopt or do not adopt a classical or emergent approach to strategy.

Question C6

Learning outcomes: L03 understand, analyse and critically evaluate how organisational and HR strategies are shaped and developed in response to internal and external environmental factors.

Those that did well, achieving a pass or above had a sound understanding of the rationale behind the RBVF and how it might be used, whilst others provided a scant description of the model and were not able to relate this to their own organisation effectively. This question was a good example where the understanding required in question (i), will directly impact the quality of the response in part (ii). Application to own organisation was generally limited; the better answers contained the argument that such a strategic approach is not effective for their organisation because it fails to consider critical and influential external factors.

The first part of this question tests candidates' understanding of the RBVF. The RBVF provides a critique of the dominant strategic models of the 1980s, associated with Porter and others. The inside-out approach of Barney (1991) analyses the firm's internal contexts in terms of strengths and weaknesses. The essence of the RBVF is that organisations are made up of unique bundles of assets, including human assets, and that access to these, and the firm's ability to make effective use of these, provide a source of competitive advantage in the market place. The assumption underpinning the RBVF is that sustained competitive advantage derives from astute use of the firm's internal resources, where their contribution is to promote development of it human capital, rather than just aligning human resources to the firm's strategic goals, The internal resources of the firm need to add positive value to the firm, be unique or rare amongst competitors, be imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable. Critiques of the model include: the RBVF exacerbates differences between firms; there are tautological concerns with the RBVF; the static nature of the RBVF; the theory assumes the economic rationality of the actors involved; and does the RBV relate to the entire human capital pool of an organisation or to just its senior managers? The second part of this question enables candidates to discuss and evaluate whether their organisation used the RBVF as a strategic approach to HRM, or not.

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Question D7

Learning Outcomes: L06 understand, analyse and critically evaluate demographic, social and technological trends and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and processes.

This was not a popular question. There were some candidates who had a solid understanding of the difference between diversity management and equal opportunity and they explored them effectively. However, a number of candidates could not explain the differences. Similarly, and perhaps inevitably, this latter group could not evaluate their own organisation's approach to equality and diversity.

Diversity management has a range of meanings depending on its use. In diversity management organisations create specific diversity policies to value difference and enhance the inclusion of all employees in the business. This contrasts with national laws or regulations that focus on disadvantaged groups. Diversity management adopts a business case approach to inclusion, aimed at improving organisational performance, competitiveness and efficiency. Equal opportunity, in contrast, is driven by a social justice case. Debates around diversity are contested and complicated by the different perspectives of the issue by researchers. Equal opportunity is the umbrella term used to describe a range of corrective responses to discrimination in employment and the labour market, based on observable characteristics. It is aimed at ensuring fair treatment of all and prospective employees. But the origins of equal opportunity concepts lie in human rights or social justice issues, following the Second World War and the civil rights movements in the US. In the UK, elements of both approaches converge to some degree. The second part of this question enables candidates to explore how these two issues are managed in their own organisations.

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Question D8

Learning Outcomes: L06 understand, analyse and critically evaluate demographic, social and technological trends and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and processes.

This question was well answered in the main. It's a question a candidate can easily relate to using their own experience. The most common factors discussed related to ICT such as video-conferencing, automated recruitment processes and database applications. Stronger answers however included some critical evaluation and also explained how the systems were contributing to the HR function. Weak answers did not relate their question to the HR function but discussed the general use of IT within the organisation, hence not addressing what was asked.

There are multiple applications of IT to HRM systems in organisations. These include: HRIS which is a technology-based system to acquire, retrieve, analyse and distribute HR information within organisations. ASM or a web-based employee assessment tool; workflow technology; application tracking systems; performance management software; internal mobility software; e-recruitment software; shared service centres; resource analysis; electronic and expenses reporting; video-conferencing; and telecommuting, which reduces costs to organisations. Other examples are not precluded from the brief list outlined here.

Question E9

Learning Outcomes: LO7 understand, analyse and critically evaluate government policy and legal regulation and how they shape and impact on organisation and HR strategies and processes.

This was not a very popular question and those who attempted it focused mainly on apprenticeship schemes and higher education. However, there were a few insightful answers that were able to make strong cases for both agreeing and disagreeing with the statement. Most candidates either firmly agreed that the statement was valid or firmly disagreed with it. Candidates were not penalised for either stance but often there was need for detailed justification for their arguments. A number of candidates offered 'own opinion' unsubstantiated claims which clearly could not progress their argument.

There are no right or wrong answers to this question. Opinions are much divided on this issue. On one side, the argument is that the state should help develop the human potential and skills of the students within schools and post-school institutions so these individuals are able to be readily absorbed in the labour market when leaving school or university. This might be loosely called the vocational role of education. On the other side, those supporting the developmental model of education argue education doesn't have a single purpose. It has a cluster of aims including: achieving basic literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills, all of which empower individuals to learn for themselves. In this approach, there is a place for science, art, literature, and sport in the curriculum. Education also socializes children and develops their ability to co-operate with a range of people from different backgrounds. Children should also have an

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understanding of their own culture and of other cultures. The point of this model is not to turn children into walking data banks but to help develop their abilities both as inquirers and moral agents. This model of education also encourages people to think for themselves and about others.

Question E10

Learning Outcomes: LO7 understand, analyse and critically evaluate government policy and legal regulation and how they shape and impact on organisation and HR strategies and processes.

Candidates appeared comfortable with this question and most were able to effectively discuss a relevant piece of employment legislation and consider the impact of it on their own organisation. Better answers focus on subjects that have created concern and work load for the HRM department such as Health and Safety and Data Protection. Weaker candidates demonstrated an inability to include an accurate piece of legislation. Answers could also have been strengthened if they had included a more effective critical evaluation; as is so often the case the arguments were one-sided. For example, there might be criticism of an initiative because it increased labour costs but with no consideration of the possible benefits.

Conclusion

The results of this paper indicate that it has provided a clear opportunity for differentiation between the good and less effective candidates. There continues to be stronger candidates who had prepared well and researched around the case study. These candidates also appeared to manage their time well between the two Sections. This gave them the opportunity to write full, well thought-through answers to Section B, rather than concentrating mostly upon the case study. Weaker candidates continue to need to understand the requirements of 'M' level writing, and the importance of research evidence and practical application.

Answers are expected to demonstrate M-level performance and the ability of candidates to develop logically structured and clearly focused responses to the questions put. They are also expected to show familiarity with recent research and examples of current practice. Evidence of research and critical evaluation will demonstrate different performance levels between stronger and weaker scripts.