Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification

Leading Managing and Developing People

May 2012

31 May 2012   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 accidental.

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 per cent in either Section A or Section B.**

SECTION A – Case Study

Note: It is permissible to make assumptions by adding to the case study details given below provided the case study is neither changed nor undermined in any way by what is added.

Arthur Bunfoot feels uncharacteristically tired this morning as he washes, shaves and dresses. Instead of his usual glass of orange juice, he opts instead for a strong cup of black coffee. To tell the truth he is more than a bit hung over and would like nothing more than to return to bed for a few hours more sleep. But he can't because his driver is about to arrive in the Bentley to take him to work. Before long, as he has every day for the past 20 years, he will have to assume the confident, strong persona of a successful company director and launch himself into ten hours of meetings, telephone conversations, memo-reading and high pressure decision-making. He loves his job, but every month it seems to get more complicated and harder to do well.

The hangover derives from Arthur's consumption of a good deal of red wine the previous night at a dinner held in his honour by the major shareholders of the company he runs. Not only is it his 60th birthday later this month, but he has also just completed 30 years' service with Tallboy Furnishings Ltd – and for most of that time he has occupied the Chief Executive's chair.

Arthur is in a reflective mood as he drinks his coffee. He looks back with some pride in his achievements. When he first arrived, the company ran a single retailing operation from its premises in London's West End. Then as now it was a privately-owned firm which specialised in the sale of high quality domestic and office furniture, most of it manufactured in the UK by suppliers with which a close relationship had been established. But in other respects much has changed.

Since Arthur succeeded the founder's son Mr Godfrey Tallboy, the company has expanded greatly. It now operates 12 stores based all around the UK and recently opened its first store in Canada. The range of styles of furniture has changed hugely, while the company has diversified into sales of lighting products, curtains and leather briefcases. Further international expansion is now being planned, as is the launch of a major website through which customers will be able to order bespoke furniture of the highest quality.

Financially the company has been a great success and Arthur is held in high regard by his peers in the industry. However it is neither his financial success nor his reputation that gives him most pride, but his achievement in turning himself into an effective leader of people. It took him a long time to learn this aspect of his job, but he thinks he has now cracked it. Always cool-headed and thoughtful, Arthur has never acted impetuously and always tries to do his best for people.

He reserves all the big HR decisions for himself. His preference is to take all short listed candidates out for lunch before thinking very carefully over a number of days about who will best fit in with the rest of the team. Once hired everyone is treated courteously and is expected to treat all colleagues, as well as customers, with the same thoughtfulness and

good manners. Arthur knows that his people perform well and work hard because they are keen to impress him personally, and this he feels is the secret of the company's continued success in an ever more competitive retail environment. 'You look after them, and they will look after you' is his favourite management mantra. He has been able, he thinks, through

force of personality and considerable personal charm to captain his team most effectively now for over two decades.

All good things must, however, come to an end, and Arthur is now starting to look forward to his well-earned retirement. He would like to go in the next four or five years, but before he can do this he still has one big HR decision to make. He needs to identify a successor and prepare that person so that he or she is in a position to step seamlessly into his shoes when the time comes. There are a number of possible candidates, but none is ideal. He wishes that there was one outstanding candidate among his existing management team who he could crown as his heir, in the way that Godfrey Tallboy had crowned him all those years ago. He could then name that person as his deputy and gradually hand over responsibilities until he felt the time was right for him to go. But this, unfortunately, is not the case.

1. **What does the published research tell us about the kind of leadership qualities that organisations such as Tallboy Furnishings should be looking for in the future? How far and in what ways are these different from those that Arthur is able to provide?**

2. **What are the major advantages and disadvantages associated with the approach to succession planning and management development that Arthur would like to adopt when choosing his own successor?**

3. **What advice would you give Arthur about how the company should now go about the task of identifying and developing his successor?**

PLEASE TURN OVER

SECTION B

Answer FIVE questions in this section, ONE per subsection A to E. To communicate your answers more clearly, you may use whatever methods you wish, for example diagrams, flowcharts, bullet points, so long as you provide an explanation of each.

A

1. For many years now research has established that levels of employee motivation are firmly linked to the way that jobs are designed. A well-designed job is much more likely to be occupied by a highly motivated worker than one which is poorly designed.

   Drawing on personal experience and your reading, set out what principles an organisation should adopt if it wants to design jobs in such a way as to maximise levels of motivation. Explain the rationale for your choice of principles.

OR

2. It is regularly claimed that one of the great advantages of being an engaged employee is the positive impact that this has for one's physical and mental health. Recent studies demonstrate strong links between health and engagement, there being significant correlations between active disengagement at work and poor health.

   i. To what extent does this research demonstrate that employee engagement programmes initiated by employers lead both to improved health outcomes and lower absence levels among staff? Justify your answer.

   ii. Explain why the extent of engagement with our work can affect our physical health.

B

3. Your manager informs you that it has become your organisation's policy to discourage staff from working more flexibly, for example by working part-time, job-sharing, taking regular sabbatical-style breaks from work or moving onto term-time contracts.

    i.   Why are managers often so reluctant to embrace these forms of flexible working?

    ii.   Why is it often argued that attitudes will have to change as our working population ages over the coming 20 years?

OR

4. Active involvement in the management of change is taking up an increasing proportion of HRD specialists' working time, and it is widely agreed that they often play a crucial role in facilitating effective change.

    i.   Set out some different roles that the HRD function can play in facilitating the effective management of change in organisations.

    ii.   Drawing on research and/or your own experience, explain why major structural change is often very difficult to manage well.

PLEASE TURN OVER

C

5. As the competitive environment gets tougher and organisations are under increasing pressure to achieve more at lower cost, some are beginning to question the role played by the HR function and to doubt whether or not it adds sufficient value.

    i.   How would you answer someone who advanced these kind of views in respect of your own organisation? Justify your answer.

    ii. Why are people keener to question the value added by the HR function than they are about the finance, marketing or IT functions in organisations?

OR

6. CIPD research carried out in 2011 found that despite high levels of unemployment, three quarters of UK organisations reported that they suffered from recruitment difficulties. A similar number reported that their chief response was to 'improve their employer brand'.

    i.   Why is it still so hard to recruit appropriate people when so many are actively looking for new employment?

    ii. In what ways can recruitment difficulties be eased through the development of an employer brand?

ADVANCED LEVEL EXAMINATIONS

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D

7. The 2011 CIPD survey on absence management reported that the average number of days of absence in the UK is 7.7 per employee, a figure that has come down significantly in recent years. There remain, however, big differences between organisations. In smaller private sector companies average rates of 3 or 4 days a year are achieved, while in the bigger public sector organisations it is common for average absence figures to be in excess of ten days per employee over the course of a year.

    i.   What factors do you think might explain why overall absence levels in the UK have fallen in the last 4 of 5 years? Draw on research and your own experience when answering.

    ii.   Why are absence rates in public sector organisations often so much higher than those in the smaller private sector companies?

OR

8. It is often said that while the aims and objectives of the HR function remain the same when a nationally-based company becomes a multi-national, achieving them becomes much harder.

    i.   To what extent do you agree with this observation and why?

    ii.   What particular challenges do Human Resource Development (HRD) specialists face in multi-national organisations?

PLEASE TURN OVER

E

9. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) recently published a report on the very limited progress that is being made in increasing the representation of women at senior levels in British industry. It concluded that organisations should be required to set targets for increased female representation on boards and to publish information each year about their progress towards meeting these targets. However, it concluded that it would be damaging to move either towards mandatory quotas or positive discrimination in favour of women as has happened in some other countries.

    i.   To what extent do you agree with the view that the very limited number of women who occupy top management positions represents a serious ethical failing on the part of British companies and why?

    ii.   To what extent do you agree with the CBI when it argues that positive discrimination and mandatory quotas would be economically damaging? Justify your answer.

OR

10. Some argue that the best way of judging whether or not someone is or is not 'a professional person' is to reflect on the way they carry out their jobs. Whether they are members of a professional body or have specific qualifications is much less relevant. It is having a professional attitude that matters.

    i.   Thinking particularly of Human Resource Management (HRM), to what extent do you agree with this point of view and why?

    ii.   What approach to work in your view constitutes 'a professional attitude'? Illustrate your answer with examples.

END OF EXAMINATION

ADVANCED LEVEL EXAMINATIONS

7LMP – Leading Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2012

Introduction

The fifth cohort of students to sit LM&DP exam was much bigger than any we have yet experienced. The total number of scripts that my team and I marked was 481. But I am glad to report that the high standards set by previous cohorts were matched by this one with an overall pass rate 73%. However, on this occasion there were sadly able only to award a rather limited number of distinctions and merits. It may have been the case that this was a hard paper to do really well on. As always there was considerable variation between the standards of the answers written by candidates from different centres.

The breakdown of marks was as follows:

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Grade	Number	Percentage of total (rounded up)
Distinction	6	1
Merit	69	14
Pass	277	58
Marginal Fail	39	8
Fail	90	19
Total	481	100

The papers were marked and moderated by myself, Krystal Wilkinson, Alex Evans, Gail Swift, Andrew Hambler, Claire Roberts, Graham Perkins and Esther Park.

Section A

The case study aimed to test knowledge and understanding of the following learning outcomes:

Learning outcome 1: Review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD.

Learning outcome 3: Debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations.

As a rule candidates wrote pretty solid and effective answers to the case study questions, although it was rare for them to produce really outstanding answers to all three parts. For some reason those who scored well on one part, seemed to be weaker on another.

A major problem that I would urge tutors to address with their candidates ahead of future exams was a strong tendency to write answers that appeared to have been prepared ahead of time to questions that were not asked. I suppose it is inevitable that this will happen with a seen case, but candidates should be reminded that however eloquently they write and however well-referenced their answers are, we can only award marks for answers which

address the questions on the paper. Too often marks are lost, entirely avoidably, by candidates who prefer to tell us what they want to, rather than attempting directly to answer the question on the paper. This was a particular problem with the first question.

It was apparent from a good proportion of answers that this was not the question candidates were expecting (or hoping) for. A very large number had clearly anticipated being given the opportunity to critique Arthur's leadership in a general sense and to advise him on how he could improve it. As a result candidates tended to struggle with the future orientation of the question. In some cases they may have been flustered by the reference to published research, but in most cases that aspect was handled pretty well.

The other major problem with this question was a failure to justify points in relation to the case. It was not uncommon for candidates to write with some authority, for example, about the shift from transactional leadership styles to those which are more transformational in nature. Many also wrote convincingly about situational leadership and emotional intelligence. But they then failed to demonstrate how these theoretical perspectives were relevant to the case. Why is a more situational style needed at Tallboy? Why is transformational preferable to transactional given the facts of the case?   Too rarely did we get really good answers that linked the students' reading with their understanding of the case.

That said, there were plenty of stronger answers too. The best ones made use of life-cycle models to develop arguments about the next stage in the company's evolution and the need for a different approach to leadership in the future. Others made good use of the points in the case about future plans to expand internationally and online, arguing in favour of the appointment of a leader who is able to lead change, who has global management experience, and who is technologically and media-savvy – all competences which are conspicuously absent in Arthur. Finally there were some good points made about generational change (baby boomers being replaced by Gen Y etc) and the need for more participative and flexible styles of leadership to evolve in companies such as Tallboys in place of those which are more autocratic and paternalistic.

Again here there was some reluctance simply to address the question head on. Too often, students were keen to tell us all they knew about succession planning, rather than to point out the advantages and disadvantages of the approach outlined in the case. Understandably candidates tended to be rather stronger on the disadvantages than the advantages, but the best managed to write convincingly on both.

The disadvantages were most apparent. This traditional approach to succession planning can be criticised for being elitist, highly subjective, unlikely to generate a diverse team of leaders and also likely to de-motivate talented people who are not chosen, mainly because of perceived unfairness. However, unethical though it may be, it remains the approach that is used, albeit subtly and informally, in many organisations.

The main advantages are that it is inexpensive and can, if good judgement is exercised, be an effective method for selecting competent future leaders. It also serves to ensure a smooth transfer of power at the very top of an organisation. Here we also have plenty of time to

available to engineer the development of a successor and a willingness on the part of the existing leader to handover steadily over a period of time.

Answers to this final part tended to be a good deal more confident, extensive and effective than answers to the first two parts, although some answers advocated approaches that were simply too extravagant and overly sophisticated for a relatively small organisation. There was also a tendency for some weaker candidates to write rather generally about principles rather than to give detailed practical recommendations. Some simply argued for the immediate establishment of an all- bells-and-whistles HR department to take over the identification of Arthur's successor, without going on to say what that HR department should actually do.

The key point here is the need to adopt a selection process which is fair and perceived to be fair. Open competition for this deputy role is thus appropriate, external as well as internal candidates being invited to apply. The better candidates suggested the use of an assessment centre of some kind, or of extended interviews, as well as a process rooted in proper job analysis. Many also correctly wrote of the probable need to involve head-hunters in locating suitable external candidates. A systematic programme of management development needs to follow.

Some argued effectively for the identification of a group of would-be successors and for them all to be given good management development opportunities, the decision about who succeeds then being taken later when Arthur actually decides to retire. The best candidates went on to argue that the absence of a person who would be in a position to succeed Arthur tomorrow should he become suddenly indisposed is a serious weakness, and one that should be rectified as soon as possible.

Section B

Question 1

Learning outcome: 2

This proved a popular choice of question which suited candidates who had gained a good understanding of job design. We were particularly impressed to mark so many papers which were able not just to cite Hackman & Oldham's (1980) Job Diagnostic Survey model, but to discuss it's principles at length. The better candidates did this and added their own ideas too, effectively updating the original principles set out in that model. There were plenty of other authors quoted here too, including scientific management theorists, and good use made of concepts such as job enrichment and job enlargement. In the main, good justifications were advanced too.

The main weakness here was to write about HRM in general rather than to demonstrate an understanding of job design. We were prepared to accept a pretty broad definition, but too often candidates wrote about performance management systems, management styles,

reward mechanisms and other matters that could not, with the best will in the world, be convincingly classed as falling within a definition of job design.

Question 2

Learning outcome: 2

This proved less enticing to candidates than might have been expected given their usual keenness to write about absence and well-being issues. I think the reference to physical health may have been off-putting, and it was quite common for weaker answers to avoid that part of the question in any event.

The few really good critical answers argued that while the research appears persuasive at first glance, it has been widely questioned. They noted that correlation is not the same thing as causation and that it is quite possible that our state of health has more impact on our levels of work engagement than our level of work engagement has on our health. This is particularly true of mental health. Someone who is depressed for reasons unrelated to their work, will often be less engaged than a colleague who enjoys good mental health. A second criticism that can be made of the statement relates to the extent to which an employer can take steps to increase engagement. Some argued that like basic motivation, engagement is intrinsically generated and can not be created by management action.

Most, however, wrote solid but unexceptional answers that focused on absence more than health. The more engaged people are with their work, the better their attendance tends to be. This is a fair argument to make in answer to this question, but it slightly avoids the nub of the issue which is about health and well-being rather than unauthorised absence.

The extent of links between physical health, well-being and a positive work experience are interesting. Of course many physical health problems have no cause in the workplace at all, but psychologists have established that some do. The key here is the concept of stress – which was correctly identified by the stronger candidates. When people are overly stressed at work and unable to cope, or worried about their futures, there is a knock on effect on poor physical health. Stress leads to cardio-vascular issues directly, but can also affect health by causing people to drink too much, take harmful drugs immoderately and either over or under eat. It can also affect personal relationships, which in turn generates more stress and further medical problems. Employee engagement is often defined as a state of commitment without stress. Hence the link to physical well being.

Question 3

Learning outcome: 4

A good proportion of candidates attempted this, and by and large answers to part one were stronger than those to part two.

The main reason for management hostility towards many forms of flexible working is their potential adverse effect on organisational efficiency. There are also costs that have to be

absorbed. For example, it costs twice as much to train two part-timers to do a job share than it does to train one. There are also recruitment costs associated with replacing people on a temporary basis during sabbaticals or school holidays. Quality and continuity of customer service also often suffers. Finally, in the case of more senior jobs, the need for a presence throughout the working week / year makes flexible working very difficult to operationalise at all. In truth the result is more work and more complexity for line managers. It was clear from the answers that candidates had experience of addressing these kind of arguments in their jobs and many wrote with considerable authority as a result. There was, however, some tendency for candidates simply to state that line managers 'don't understand' the obvious benefits associated with flexible working, without demonstrating any serious grasp of their perspective.

We intended that candidates should focus on the employment of older staff when tackling part two, and most did, But a good number sidestepped that issue and wrote much more generally about changing attitudes towards work-life balance over time. Unless these arguments were specifically linked to the question of ageing, marks were inevitably lost.

The argument about population ageing relates to the likelihood that employers will in the future increasingly rely on older staff to achieve key organisational objectives. Fewer younger people in the labour market will force employers to look to older age groups, members of whom are often reluctant to work full-time, in order to fulfil skill needs. In order to attract and retain these people employers will have to make work attractive to them. This involves treating them with respect and paying them well, but flexible working is a key requirement too. The best candidates made these points with some conviction.

Question 4

Learning outcome: 4

This was a very straight forward question that was, in the main, answered pretty well. The main problem was a failure in the case of some candidates to write specifically about HRD when answering part 1. Some either misread it as 'HRM' or else decided in any event to range much more widely than any reasonable definition of 'HRD' could allow.

The HRD function plays a number of roles. The major ones are as follows:

- training and developing managers who are skilled at leading change

- facilitating / leading skills acquisition associated with change

- developing an organisational culture that is open to change

- training interventions in areas such as communication and conflict management that are related to profound change

- development of a 'learning organisation' which evaluates past change episodes with a view to improving in the future.

The best answers covered this variety of ways in which the HRD function helps to facilitate effective change.

Part 2 was also generally well-answered, although there was sometimes a tendency not to draw on personal experience in the way that the question asked.

Change of a profound kind is often very bumpy and can have unsatisfactory outcomes. However much planning is carried out, it is always difficult to carry through really well. And research demonstrates clearly that change often fails to fully meet original objectives. The reason is because profound structural change is unsettling at best, and the source of damaging conflict at worst. People perceive themselves as winners and losers and act politically to protect their interests. Good answers made points of this kind, while also drawing on organisational examples to illustrate them.

Question 5

Learning outcome: 5

Answers to the first question varied considerably depending on the organisation the candidates worked for. The best answers were wide-ranging, touching on the recruitment / retention of superior staff, on effective performance management via employee engagement, efficient personnel administration and potentially on the role played by HR in contributing to the formation of strategy, to the management of change and to the creation of a culture of shared purpose. Some less convincing answers did little more than simply list what the HR function did without going on to explain how this really added value. There were also a lot of claims made about avoiding tribunal cases, which are fair, but which rather demonstrate the lack of ambition that seems to permeate some HR departments.

The second question was more challenging. Again answers varied, the key requirement being that a coherent and well-justified answer was put forward. Many focused on the failures of the 'old' transactional model of personnel management and on the tendency of HR people in organisations that follow it to prevent managers from acting effectively rather than supporting them. The argument that most HR activity can either be outsourced or delegated to line managers was also be made.

Most, however, developed solid arguments about the way that most HR activity is longer-term in terms of its objectives and produces less obvious immediate financial impact than that of the other functions. The weaker answers were thin and general, saying little if anything at all about IT, marketing and finance.

Question 6

Learning outcome: 5

The answer to the first question lies mainly in a mismatch between the skills and experience that people have, and those that employers are seeking. There is generally little difficulty in recruiting people for less skilled roles, although employers who pay low wages sometimes struggle to find people with the basic literacy, numeracy and social skills they require or who have the set of attitudes they are seeking. The big problems are found when recruiting for management and professional roles where specific higher-level skills are required. The best answers made these points, often referencing the Leitch Report and associated research. They also stressed the significance of appropriate experience, arguing that many people who are currently being made redundant, lack the experience necessary to step into the kind of roles that are being created by organisations.

A range of answers were also provided in answer to part 2. What mattered was that the candidate demonstrated an understanding of what 'employer branding' involves and that a credible answer was presented and justified. Good answers went well beyond improvements to recruitment advertising to look at the employee value proposition that is offered and at how this can be enhanced. The key point about branding is that it is about differentiating an offering from competitors, and the best answers took that perspective. Weaker answers failed to grasp what employer branding involves, often writing rather generally about HRM instead.

Question 7

Learning outcome: 6

This was very widely-answered and produced answers of very varied quality. It is difficult to phrase questions that relate to this learning outcome which do not favour people working in one sector or another, and this attempt to do so failed. People working in the public sector clearly have a much better informed understanding of the absence debate than those working in the private sector and this was inevitably reflected in the marks. That said, only in a minority of cases was a very high degree of ignorance or misunderstanding demonstrated.

As far as part 1 was concerned, there are several possible explanations ranging from improved medical outcomes to better management of absence by HR teams. The most likely explanation, however, relates to economic conditions and to reduced levels of job security. When redundancies are in the offing, unauthorised absence always falls because people seek to impress their managers in a bid to hold onto their jobs. Indeed, presenteeism can be a problem in such circumstances. The best candidates were able to cite absence levels and trends in their own organisations and explain patterns there, while also making a range of points about probable causes for the observed trends.

As far as part 2 was concerned, there has been a long-running debate about the very different levels of absence achieved by public and private sector organisations. Some argue that it related to the additional stress that public sector workers are confronted with – and

this point was made by some candidates. More realistically it could be linked to age profiles (public sector workers being considerably older on average) and to a more tolerant approach to absence management. Long term absentees tend to get dismissed on grounds of incapability much earlier in the private sector – and particularly in small organisations – than in the public sector. And this probably accounts for most of the statistical difference.

Question 8

Learning outcome: 6

This is a big question about which a range of perspectives could be developed, but it is also straight forward. It was only attempted by a minority of the candidates.

The stronger answers included points about the added complexity associated with managing people in an international context. The complexity stems from cultural difference and, in particular, very different expectations as far is work is concerned, of the kind set out in Hofstede's work and that of many others too. Institutional frameworks are also varied. Employment law, training systems and other labour market institutions operate very differently in different countries. In addition there is the need to work with multi-cultural teams, including senior management teams that are diverse in terms of their values and modus operandi. Further added complexity derives from the need to employ expatriate staff. There is now a great deal of research looking at how difficult it is to recruit, retain, engage and motivate expats. Further points that could be developed concerned multi-national reporting lines and maintaining effective management control across a wide range of geographical locations. Most who attempted the question made these kinds of points pretty effectively.

The better answers to the second question focused on the training and development of expatriate staff, on both pre-expatriation preparation as well as on the development of cultural awareness more generally in order to facilitate better understanding and team working. Language training was also often covered. Effective senior management development is the other big challenge faced by HRD specialists in MNCs. However, as in the case of question 4 (above) too often marks were lost by a failure to focus on HRD specifically when answering part 2 of this question.

Question 9

Learning outcome: 7

This was answered by a good majority of candidates and most did it reasonably well. They developed sound arguments, often quite strongly worded both in favour and against the points being made in the question.

For some there was a strong ethical dimension. For others while the absence of women from the higher reaches of management hierarchies was regrettable, it was not seen primarily to be due to any ethical failings on the part of organisations.

Much depended on how far people judged that the absence of women on executive boards is due to deliberate discrimination, how much to institutional and societal sexism of a general kind, and how much to other factors. Many argued that the situation has arisen due to social expectations of various kinds which make more men than women push hard in their careers for promotion, money and power.

As long as a coherent and well-justified case was advanced, marks were awarded.

The same was true of part 2 where again a wide variety of views were advanced. The argument for quotas and positive discrimination is that it leads to greater diversity in senior management teams (which is positive economically) and also forces the issue. The argument against is partly an ethical one (that is, it leads to high performing men being denied promotion because of their gender) and partly business-based (that is, the best should be promoted on merit alone in order to ensure the best level of performance). There are many alternative positions too which are perfectly credible. Most tended to focus on these latter points, only the strongest answers making a wider range of points. The weaker answers simply ignored the economic angle altogether.

Question 10

Learning outcome: 7

This was answered by a good number of candidates, answers to part 2 generally being rather stronger than those to part 1. The main problem with the first part was a failure to address the question directly. Students tended to discuss the issues rather generally rather than to provide a clear, concise and direct answer. Those that did tended to argue that while membership of a professional body was useful, bringing with it credibility and a commitment to ethical practice, but that it was not necessary in order to be a good HR professional. Some I fear tried rather unconvincingly to advance an alternative argument because they thought they should, and not from any real position of conviction.

The best answers to part 2 made a number of distinct points, focusing for example on high levels of engagement, good ethics, keeping up to date with professional knowledge, courtesy and putting the interests of clients first.

Conclusions

These were an interesting set of papers to mark and the overall results were pleasing. But I was disappointed that there were so few truly outstanding answers. A great number of candidates produced some impressive answers, but were unable to maintain a consistently high standard across all parts of all questions, which is what they have to do in order to gain distinction and merit marks.

I hope that my comments above provide good guidance for tutors and for students registering to sit future LM&DP papers. There certainly are lessons to be learned from this cohort, not least to be wary of writing out pre-prepared material in answer to Section A

questions even when it is not of direct relevance to the actual question. My sense is that a lot of marks would have been higher had students spent five minutes thinking about the appropriate answer and then writing something quite short and basic, rather than rushing to write down what they knew and had prepared before the exam.

As far as Section B is concerned, as always, it is really simply a question of writing answers that are:

- full

- direct

- well-informed.

Those who do this pass. Those who cannot tend to struggle.

Stephen Taylor
Chief examiner