

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification
**Leading, Managing and Developing
People**
January 2020

Date: 23 January 2020

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.

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

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.

The Crown at Southington Magna is a long-established pub-restaurant and small hotel located in an attractive rural location twenty miles south of a city. For many years it has enjoyed an excellent trade, being the main social hub in a village, the main provider of hotel accommodation in its area and a popular destination for holidaymakers and day-trippers looking for refreshment. There are two bars, a comfortable lounge, a spacious restaurant, a beer garden and a function room that comfortably holds thirty people attending meetings, dinners and small wedding receptions. In the main building there are eight hotel bedrooms.

Until December 2018 the Crown was run by owner-managers from the Stout family who had been the licensees for over seventy years. Following the sudden death of Gordon Stout the business was sold to a company called Highball Trading Ltd who run a number of pubs in the nearby city. They have invested a great deal of money refurbishing the Crown, installing new fixtures and fittings, building a new accommodation block with ten further letting bedrooms, and introducing a new restaurant menu. To date, however, the new management at the Crown has not been commercially successful. Most longer-serving staff have now either left or been dismissed, creating a range of operational difficulties.

The following 'traveller rating' statistics from an online rating website show that customers are often unimpressed with their recent experiences at the Crown:

2018:		2019:
Excellent:	479	67
Good:	306	90
Average:	82	147
Poor:	24	219
Terrible:	3	217

Some guests and diners have left comments on review websites. While some are positive, many are not. Here are some representative examples from the last three months:

“Possibly due to the newly built rooms there was a large septic tank nearby us that smelt like it needed to be emptied.”

“Disappointed at night when choosing our evening meal. Some food advertised on the menu and specials board was not available. Also the toast at breakfast was appalling, not nice at all.”

“The one evening meal we had at the hotel was a disappointment, I chose the lasagne, which was so sloppy I could have eaten it like thick soup.”

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

"The bedroom was tidy and initially looked clean. However when I went into the bathroom there was the previous lodgers' hair conditioner still on the bath tub and the bathroom bin had tissues, a disposable razor and finished toilet roll in it."

"The staff really didn't make you feel welcome. Service rather slow but more to do with the kitchen service. Wouldn't stay again."

"Barman with beard not helpful when we were trying to pay for drinks. No change or other money to give us our change. Not a good attitude"

"The dinner was very disappointing and over-priced and the cooked breakfast was even worse. It was mostly cold when served. The tea was very weak and our request for an extra tea bag was ignored"

"Service staff were a little untrained, not the happiest bunch"

"I had to return several cups to the kitchen before being replaced with a clean one at breakfast."

"There was a long wait getting our meal. We had to wait over one and a half hours to be served. Slow service."

"Some of the place looked like it needed a good dust. My wife wrote 'dust me' on the table in the entrance and it stayed there throughout our stay."

"We booked this hotel after a recommendation because we were looking for a dog friendly hotel. It was dog friendly but we didn't feel the staff were very people friendly."

"Throughout our visit we only saw two staff members - obviously not enough staff to run the restaurant efficiently."

"This place could be so much more. Owner or manager lady took us to room and started double checking to see if her staff had replaced toilet rolls. The young lady waitress with the glasses also seemed so rushed and aiming to please. Certainly no trust in staff."

"The visit was spoiled by levels of indifference and apathy from the staff that were beyond belief. I have never felt so unwelcome anywhere."

"This time was disappointing - not terrible but disappointing - maybe because I was expecting the same standards as last time."

"The window in the public hallway next to my bedroom had the biggest spider web which was the length of the window from the outside (complete with busy spider). There were several flies trapped in the web."

"We overheard a major row in the office behind the reception desk. The manager was shouting at some colleagues. One shouted back at her. Another came out crying and left the building."

PLEASE TURN OVER

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

You are recruited as a consultant by Highball Trading Ltd to advise them on people management issues. On your first day, you are told that your first project is to investigate what is happening at The Crown with a view to making recommendations for substantial and rapid improvement.

Drawing on your experience of staffing and management issues, as well as your studies, state what key points you would make in the following sections of your initial report:

1. Diagnosis of the major problem areas.
2. Immediate HR priorities.
3. Longer-term HR actions that will be required.

In each case take care to justify your key points, drawing on published research and examples from your reading where appropriate.

It is recommended that you spend equal time addressing each of these three areas.

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

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. In recent years the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has carried out a great deal of research into job quality as part of its aim to encourage improvements in our working lives. Over time it is hoped that ways will be found to measure the overall quality of jobs with a view to tracking developments and benchmarking between organisations and industries. However, before this can be done, an agreed definition needs to be established as to what exactly constitutes 'good work' or a 'good job'.
 - i. Drawing on published research, what **FOUR** distinct features would you say should be present for a job to be considered of sufficient quality to be labelled 'good'? Justify your answer.
 - ii. You are asked to suggest **ONE** way in which your organisation could improve the quality of your employees' jobs over the next year. What would you say and why?

OR

2. You receive the following email from a new Director of Human Resources in an organisation you work for who has a great deal of industry experience, but has not formally studied the subject:

'Good morning. I have been asked by the Board of Directors to cite some convincing research evidence in support of our proposal to increase spending on people management initiatives by 50% next year. I know that you are familiar with research that has been published on links between HRM activity and business performance. Which study or group of studies would you recommend I include in my presentation? What are they key points made in the research?'

How would you reply to this email? Justify your answer.

PLEASE TURN OVER

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

B

3. The legendary football manager, Sir Matt Busby, once observed that “bullying can bring instant obedience but never lasting results”. Yet it remains very common to hear complaints of serious bullying in workplaces, often perpetrated by people in leadership roles.
- i. Illustrating your answer with examples, explain how far you agree with the view that bullying approaches to leadership cannot lead to positive outcomes for organisations.
 - ii. Given the limitations of the approach, why is it apparently still so common?

OR

4. There is now a considerable body of research focused on the advantages and disadvantages of organisations appointing diverse senior leadership teams. This shows that while there are considerable, potential benefits, the approach can be risky. Highly diverse teams can sometimes be dysfunctional in the way that they operate.
- i. What potential advantages can accrue for an organisation when its senior team is made up of people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse characteristics? Justify your answer.
 - ii. What practical steps would you recommend are taken by organisations looking to ensure that a more diverse senior leadership team operates functionally and not dysfunctionally?

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

C

5. After a long period of steady increase, the proportion of the UK workforce that is employed on part-time contracts has stagnated in recent years. The make-up of the part-time workforce is also changing. More women are working full-time and more men are working part-time. A greater proportion of those who work part-time are either under the age of 25 or over the age of 60. These trends appear likely to continue.
- i. Drawing on your reading and/or observations explain why employers might be disinclined to offer more part-time working opportunities and why employees might be less inclined to work part-time?
 - ii. Explain why the part-time workforce appears to be becoming less female-dominated and more diverse in terms of its age?

OR

6. You have been asked to join a change management planning team as the main representative from the HR function in an organisation you are working for. A significant *cultural* change programme is being planned over the next year with the aim of making the organisation more responsive to its customer needs and more commercially-driven.

As a people management specialist you are tasked with making **THREE** distinct recommendations describing the steps the organisation might take to help ensure the planned change is achieved in practice.

PLEASE TURN OVER

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

D

7. The critics argue that “bureaucracy-busting meetings”, as famously held at Google, should be held regularly, and their recommendations acted upon.

Others argue that the nature of much public sector work requires standardisation, fairness, record keeping and public accountability. The extent to which HR-related bureaucracy can be ‘busted’ is thus limited.

- i. Drawing on your own experience of working in HR discuss how far it is possible in practice to dispense with bureaucratic procedures?
- ii. How far, in your view, would it be wise for HRM in the public sector to ‘bust bureaucracy’ and adopt more pragmatic approaches? Justify your answer.

OR

8. You start working for an organisation based in your home country which is looking to expand its operations overseas for the first time. Subsidiary operations in three diverse continents are planned, each of which will in part be overseen by expatriate managers on three year overseas secondments from corporate headquarters. Elaborate plans aimed at selecting, training, rewarding and supporting these expatriate managers and their families are in place. However, as yet, no similar plans for handling their repatriation at the end of the three year assignments have been considered.

You know from your CIPD studies that repatriation can often be as difficult and risky from the employer perspective as initial expatriation. You are asked to make recommendations as to what your employer needs to do to help ensure that repatriation is managed effectively and that returning managers choose to continue working with the organisation.

What **THREE** principal recommendations would you make? Justify your answer.

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

E

9. Investigations undertaken into major corporate scandals reveal that employees, including quite senior employees, often have serious concerns about the ethics of management decisions and strategies. They are, however, too frightened to speak out and raise their concerns for fear that in doing so they will restrict their careers or be dismissed.

A potentially effective way of dealing with this problem would be to provide a whistleblowing channel which would permit people with serious concerns about corporate ethics to report these confidentially to an independent body. This in turn could then raise concerns with the organisation or report instances of potential wrongdoing to an appropriate enforcement agency.

Drawing on your knowledge of your own organisation and of others, discuss the potential advantages and disadvantages of whistleblowing arrangements of this kind. Is this a development you would welcome or be cautious about? Justify your answer.

OR

10. The notion of professionalism in the context of management work is generally viewed positively. We aspire to act and be seen to be acting professionally. Laloux (2014) questions this. He argues that too often employees in management roles feel obliged to 'put on a professional mask when they are at work, keeping a distance, showing a masculine resolve, displaying determination and strength, hiding doubts and vulnerability'. The emotional and spiritual parts of our characters are kept hidden from our colleagues, leading to workplace interactions which are stifled and unnatural. He argues that managers, as well as their organisations, would benefit if people let their professional masks slip, allowing more genuine, and deeper relationships to flourish. We should be ourselves more than we typically feel we can be when at work.

- i. To what extent do you feel the need to put on a professional mask when you go to work, leaving a large part of your personality at home? Illustrate your answer with examples.
- ii. How far do you agree with Laloux that organisations would flourish more if colleagues were able to form fuller, closer and more genuine relationships at work rather than being restricted by the demands of 'professionalism'?

END OF EXAMINATION

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

Introduction

An unusually large cohort of candidates (231) sat this January's examination and as a cohort they performed very well, continuing the record of high pass rates we have seen in January exams over recent years. The number of merits and distinctions was striking too. There were some seriously strong papers among these that it was a pleasure to mark. The final breakdown of marks was as follows:

January 2020		
Grade	Number	Percentage of total
Distinction	17	8
Merit	48	21
Pass	128	55
Marginal Fail	10	4
Fail	28	12
Total	231	100

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

SECTION A

Learning outcomes:

LO2: Evaluate major theories relating to motivation, commitment and engagement at work and how these are put into practice by organisations.

LO5: Critically discuss the aims and objectives of the HRM and HRD functions in organisations and how these are met in practice.

This was a fairly straight forward case which focused on mainstream HR issues. Few had many difficulties writing solid answers and many were very effective. As always there is a minority of candidates who allocate insufficient time to Section A, typically by leaving it to the end, who lose marks simply because their answers are insufficiently substantial. It is important to remember that this part makes up 50% of your total marks, so it makes sense to spend around half your total time in the exam working on it. Another reason for poor performance is also familiar. Candidates sometimes write answers which are too generic and are not sufficiently focused on the detail of the case. It is frustrating as some of these are full and contain evidence of wider reading and original thought. But this is not what the case study question is looking to test. So, here, for example we did sometimes read answers which were really impressive discussions of employee engagement, complete with references. What candidates need to try to do is to use their reading when justifying the more practical recommendations that they make.

This case contained information about a wide range of fundamental people management problems in the case study organisation and the stronger answers picked up on a good number of these. There is clearly a major staff retention problem, and quite probably a recruitment problem too. Inexperienced people are being appointed to take the place of long-serving employees, but there is also good evidence of staff shortages being an issue at some times. Attracting qualified staff is thus a significant problem too. It is also apparent from the quotations in the case study that there are issues relating to service quality. Fundamental problems include poor cleanliness and hygiene, overly long waits for food service and disappointing standards of cooking / presentation. A third issue is staff attitudes. There is a lack of commitment, in all likelihood due to low levels of engagement and motivation. Inadequate training appears to be a further issue. These deficiencies are leading to poor performance – below an acceptable standard. There is also an employee relations problem, which may in part explain the poor performance, lack of commitment, high staff turnover and difficulties staffing up the operation. The appointed manager is clearly struggling to supervise her team at all effectively. This could be due to stress, inadequate experience or to her simply being the wrong person to put in charge of this property.

There was thus plenty of room for different arguments to be advanced in respect of the second two questions. The immediate need is to address issues relating to hygiene (uncleaned rooms, dust, spiders webs, septic tank, crockery etc). Standards are unacceptable and the poor publicity concerning these things will have a seriously negative impact on reputation and business levels if not dealt with straight away. Clear standards need to be set, performance monitored and training provided. Better supervision with more attention to detail is needed. Secondly, service quality needs to be addressed. Standards have slipped, particularly in respect of food quality, menu choices being unavailable and length of wait for service. This

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

may require staffing changes, which will take time or, some additional staffing (particularly in the kitchen) which will carry a cost. Training may well also be a requirement.

Longer-term there are cultural issues to address, particularly in respect of low levels of commitment and engagement. A new manager may be required to achieve this if relationships and levels of trust have deteriorated beyond repair. Management training will certainly be required. The organisation will need to review its performance management systems and introduce approaches which are effective and perceived as fair. Clear objectives and goals need to be set and translated into individual targets. People need to be rewarded for good performance using financial and non-financial incentives of different kinds.

When marking credit was given for points which relate to specific issues raised in the case, for relevant citations to published research findings / examples from third party sources and justification based on personal experience or observation. To score highly here it was also necessary for candidates to explain why they were recommending a course of action as well as simply setting out the nature of that recommendation. Sometimes candidates assume that their points are self-explanatory. This is not so. Persuasive justification is always necessary to score well.

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

SECTION B

Question A1

Learning outcome: LO1 review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD

Candidates rarely had any difficulty naming features of a 'good quality job' when answering part 1 here, but some did not go on to explain their choice by way of justification as the question asks.

CIPD research published in 2019 suggests that the following seven key elements are appropriate to take into account when seeking to measure 'good work':

Good work is fairly rewarded: Good work gives people the means to securely make a living; Good work gives opportunities to develop skills and a career and ideally gives a sense of fulfilment; Good work provides a supportive environment with constructive relationships; Good work allows for work–life balance; Good work is physically and mentally healthy; Good work gives employees the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives; Good work should be accessible to all. Discussion of these kinds of points formed the basis of good answers here, but there was also scope for candidates to develop their own additional points or to express these broad ones in a different form. They needed to suggest and provide a reasoned justification for four distinct elements in order to pass. Answers to part 2 varied considerably depending on the organisation concerned. What mattered here when awarding marks was that a reasonably full answer was provided with a well-informed and persuasive justification. Some part 2 answers were rather limited in terms of detail, but most were interesting and effectively justified.

Question A2

Learning outcome: LO1 review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD

Any of the leading research studies published over the past twenty or thirty years into links between HR practice and improved business performance could form the basis of strong answers this answer. Meta-analyses which incorporate measures drawing from many such studies were also good to cite here, but references to qualitative work could be as valid and persuasive as the quantitative studies. Students often choose to discuss some of the early work demonstrating a relationship between HR practice and performance (Huselid, Arthur, Delery & Doty, Pfeffer etc), but many also demonstrated knowledge of later work on the nature of the relationships (black box studies, Batt, Jiang, Cappelli etc) or the process models associated with Guest and Wright. To score well they needed to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a study or group of studies and to justify their choice thoughtfully. Some wrote about studies that had some relevance, but were not entirely focused on links between HRM and superior business performance. Those focused on employee engagement specifically, notably the Gallup Studies, featured in some answers. We considered that these met the requirements of this question and rewarded candidates accordingly.

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

Question B3

Learning outcome: LO3 debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations

This question permitted students to draw on examples from their reading or from their own experience or observations, including those of others. Pretty well all unequivocally agreed with the argument presented, namely that bullying rarely brings long-term advantages because it is a very poor way of bringing people together, developing a sense of shared purpose or engaging people more generally with an organisation's strategy. Over time organisations characterised by bullying styles of leadership can have difficulty recruiting and particularly retaining good people. However, there are counter-arguments that can be put, and some developed thoughts of this kind in their answers. First, the term 'bullying' inevitably spans a great deal of different types of conduct and situations. What to some people will be regarded as firm, clear management will be bullying to others. There are also behaviours commonly described as comprising 'low level bullying' which while often unpleasant may not have any significant long-term detrimental effects. It is also true that there are some highly successful corporations which have sustained success over time while persisting with leadership styles that are macho, toxic, autocratic and readily characterised as bullying (some banks, media companies, restaurants with diva head chefs etc). These tend to pay high salaries so as to buy acceptance from staff who develop thick skins so as to be able to handle it

A number of alternative and equally valid arguments were advanced in answer to part two. It can be argued that bullying is a question of degree and that when deployed in a limited manner, perhaps in extreme circumstances under a lot of pressure when people need to be forced to change their attitudes it has a role to play. Sometimes senior managers will appoint a person with a tendency to bully in order to lead and shake up a department or division that is underperforming. It can also be argued that some leaders who have a great deal to offer in terms of vision, experience, charisma etc, may also have weaknesses including a tendency to bully. Their organisations (and staff) put up with it, because of the counter veiling positive attributes. Ultimately though it is common because senior managers are frequently highly ambitious people who are where they are because they are better forcing themselves up corporate ladders than others. They have the sharpest elbows and the thickest skins. Many have themselves been bullied and decide that the best way of surviving is to hit back harder. These types of personality thus get to the top more often and assume leadership roles.

Question B4

Learning outcome: LO3 debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations

There were some really strong and interesting answers to this question, many citing candidates' own observations. The main way that marks were lost was a tendency to focus entirely on international cultural diversity (drawing on Hofstede etc) which was not quite what this question was looking to test. Where relevant points were made, however, we awarded marks.

The main advantages of assembling a diverse leadership team are associated with innovative thinking. When a senior team shares many characteristics it tends not to embrace new thinking or to be aware of the possibilities. Group-think can set in and hold an organisation back. This

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

is particularly true in faster-moving business contexts where organisational agility and creativity are required to thrive. The more knowledge-based an industry, the greater the potential advantages from diverse thinking. Some studies also suggest that people working in diverse teams work harder at identifying the strengths and weaknesses in their arguments, because it is harder to persuade others of their validity. Greater cognitive effort is thus expended and more attention given to detail when making decisions. There are also sound points to be made about the impact of having diverse senior people in terms of them acting as mentors and role models to others, hence encouraging greater equality across an organisation. The final main advantage, of course, is that an organisation with a diverse customer base can benefit from knowledge and insight in its management teams which reflect the full range of that base.

The great potential disadvantage is that diversity of values can lead to clashes and disunity among senior leaders. Constructive conflict which leads to the testing of views and innovative thinking, then becomes destructive. Trust is reduced, rival coalitions form and the potential benefits are lost. The need is therefore to select people who have personalities which reduce the chances of dysfunctional team behaviour. People who have a high level of openness, are empathetic and natural team players are those to look for. Ideally senior teams should also be composed of people who are themselves committed to the principles of diversity. Values are then shared, even when ideas may differ significantly. Training interventions also play an important potential role, as do performance management systems which reward effective team working.

Question C5

Learning outcome: LO4 contribute to the promotion of flexible working and effective change management in organisations

Answers to this question were very varied and were, as a result, interesting to mark. According to CIPD research published in 2019 it is not entirely clear why the growth in part-time working which was very strong in the period here 2010 has stagnated. So there was plenty of room here for candidates to speculate and provide their own justifications. One suggestion in the report is that the trend is in part due to the contraction of the public sector after the financial crash, a sector in which there is a great deal of part-time working. The same is true of non-online retailing – also a large employer of part-time staff. Another is that the rise of technologies which allow people to work more flexible full-time hours, including working from home has created opportunities which allow people better to manage home responsibilities while working full-time, and a good proportion of these answers focused on this area. It also remains the case that part-time work tends to be associated with lower pay and fewer career development opportunities, so this may explain why people with families to support and mortgages to finance prefer to work full-time when they can. It is also argued that there was a substantial spurt in requests to move onto part-time contracts in the years following the introduction of a formal right to request flexible working in 2003. People who want to work part-time are now thus doing so, and that any pent-up demand for the right in reluctant organisations has now been satisfied. Some managers also remain resistant to increasing part-time working except where it is clearly justified operationally (eg: uneven patterns of business across the day or week etc).

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

Answers to the second question tended more to focus on wider social trends, particularly as regards career development aspirations and opportunities for women. Senior roles are less dominated by men than used to be the case and these are much less likely to be part-time than more junior roles in organisations. Men are tending to retire later than they used to, and in many cases choose to continue carrying out some work after reaching the state pension age. They are therefore looking for all kinds of flexible working opportunities in their 60s to a greater extent, and this includes part-time work. We have also, of course, seen a big increase in the proportion of young people who are staying on in full-time education after the age of 18. Over 50% now go on to university courses. More younger people, including young men, are thus looking to work part-time while studying.

Question C6

Learning outcome: LO4 contribute to the promotion of flexible working and effective change management in organisations

This was a popular choice of question and was generally done well. There was, however, a tendency to cite theory without qualification on occasion, rather than to focus on the practical as the question requires. The key was that candidates put forward three distinct proposals and justified each reasonably fully and persuasively. There are many possibilities, but the most common to related to effective communication, employee involvement / participation and the use of rewards and incentives. Other possibilities might relate to HRD activity, career progression, trade union negotiation and creative performance management activities of various kinds. There was plenty of scope here for original argument and no obvious right or wrong answers. The better justified the argument advanced, the higher the mark. This question did not ask students to set out a model of change management (i.e.: Kotter, Rodgers, Lewin etc), which they demonstrated a propensity to do. It was fine when points were made that were informed by such models, but these needed to be part of an original analysis and not just a description of something encompassed in one of the models.

Question D7

Learning outcome: LO6 assess the contribution made by HRM and HRD specialists in different types of organisation

This was really most interesting to mark because views were so divided, not on the merits of bureaucracy so much as on the practicality of reducing it. There were a wide range of well-informed and original arguments developed that we were able to reward with high marks. Perfectly good points were made either way in answering these two questions. The first is not focused wholly on the public sector and so could be answered with reference to HR practice in any sector or sectors. It is, of course, easier to state that bureaucracy should be busted than actually achieving it, because there will always be a side to HR which is administrative in nature. Records need to be kept (holidays, training, health and safety, absence etc), contracts need to be issued, disciplinary rules communicated and enforced, a pay roll to run accurately. HR departments can look to harness technologies, shared services-style operational arrangements and outsourcing to carry these activities more efficiently. But there is inevitably a limit as to how far this can go. As far as the public sector is concerned there is an additional level of public accountability and legitimate media interest which means that extra care needs to be taken in acting fairly and being seen to do so. Good practice approaches are expected, and this inevitably means the use of rules and procedures which seek to ensure that these

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

principles are adhered to. That said, people with experience of public sector HR often point out that some procedures are overly complex and time consuming. Tick-box exercises frustrate public sector professionals in HRM just as much as in other fields. There is thus scope for some bureaucracy-busting in most public sector organisations.

Question D8

Learning outcome: LO6 assess the contribution made by HRM and HRD specialists in different types of organisation

This was mainly answered very well by candidates who grasped that it was focused on repatriation (ie; returning home after a period working overseas) rather than initial expatriation. However, a significant minority lost marks by writing about expatriation more generally, which was not what we were focusing on here.

Extensive research into repatriation following overseas postings has been published which suggests that it is often neglected or paid less attention to, but when handled badly leads to de-motivated staff, reduced engagement and avoidable turnover among people in whom the employers have invested a great deal. The adjustment back to life at home after a potentially life-changing and exhilarating period spent living well in another country, can be extremely difficult for expats and their families. There is thus a good business case to advance, as well as one based in concerns about employee wellbeing, for devoting resources to the careful management of repatriation episodes.

Many potential suggestions were made in answer to this question. Prominent examples included, pre-departure training, assistance with practical relocation arrangements, ensuring that career development aspirations are met, ongoing support / counselling in the first few months following repatriation, encouraging colleagues to be understanding and welcoming, and assistance more generally in managing expectations. What mattered from a marking perspective was that distinct points were made and justified persuasively. Examples and research findings were sometimes used and these were rewarded, but they were not a specific requirement in the case of this answer.

Question E9

Learning outcome: LO7 promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD practice in organisations

In cases of unlawful activity, serious dishonesty, cover-ups or where health, safety or wellbeing are being put at risk through reckless / negligent management activity, the existence of a confidential whistleblowing channel might very well have a deterrent effect and lead to higher standards of business ethics. There are of course issues over how it would be funded and under what restrictions it would operate, but in principle it is hard to argue that it would not represent an empowering piece of new regulation with considerable potential social benefits.

For more minor matters and in cases where managers misjudge rather than wrongly it is harder to justify a statutory whistleblowing channel. As most ethically questionable activity takes this form, affecting limited numbers of people, the costs might well seriously outweigh the benefits. More generally questions can be raised about how confidential whistleblowing can ever really be in practice. It is often not difficult to identify the likely whistle-blower based on analysis of

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2020

who knows what. So the extent to which there would be a genuine deterrent effect for organisations is questionable. Data protection laws, fiduciary duties and other regulatory obligations on employees would also have to be addressed, making the proposed system hard to operationalise in practice.

Question E10

Learning outcome: LO7 promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD practice in organisations

Most candidates had a shot at this question and often wrote at some length, setting out and justifying their views. There was plenty of scope to reflect on personal experience and, as a result, these answers were often really interesting to read and mark. Answers varied greatly here reflecting the range of perfectly valid alternative arguments that can be made when answering both parts of the question. Most candidates, being practicing HR managers, were helpfully familiar with the inevitable tensions that are present between the need to develop genuine empathy, trust and friendships with colleagues, and the need to maintain a professional distance. Getting the balance right is always difficult for anyone charged with leading a team. Most of us do indeed feel obliged and typically choose to don professional masks, although the extent varies from individual to individual.

It is probably true that organisations could benefit in some ways if colleagues were closer personally, but there are potential disadvantages too – particularly in the case of relationships up and down organisational hierarchies. If perceived unfairness and favouritism is to be avoided and the ability to make tough decisions freely preserved, professional distance characterised by mask wearing is necessary to the efficient running of a workplace.

Conclusion

Another strong performance from a 7LMP cohort, with a good number of really outstanding papers. As always some struggled with time allocations across questions, and many clearly found some of the questions more straight forward to answer than others. There was also a tendency in some cases to misread the question, fail to justify points, and to avoid providing a full answer to all parts. But most managed to negotiate some tough Section B questions with confidence and good professional knowledge. The marking team were impressed overall.

Stephen Taylor
Devon