



Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification

**Human Resource Management in  
Context**

**May 2018**

**Date: Tuesday 22 May 2018**

**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.

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### **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.

### **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.**

Silverbridge Homecare provides nursing and home care, including for the elderly, and specialist care packages from 80 locations around the country. The company employs around 15,000 workers, a huge increase compared to its initial workforce of some 1,000 workers. Most care workers are female, over 50 years old, and about 20 percent are from overseas. Due to its changing business contexts, Silverbridge faces some critical HR and related issues. Staff shortages, for example, continue to pose a big problem for the company and its HR function needs a more strategic direction.

Difficulties in recruiting younger staff have meant Silverbridge has tended to recruit older workers, as well as staff from overseas. Its equal opportunities policy addresses age issues and the company commonly offers older workers flexible retirement arrangements and access to training and development. However, recent government regulations are deterring some older people, who would otherwise be willing to work, from seeking employment with Silverbridge.

There is no union representation in Silverbridge; there is only a works council. Silverbridge is currently trying to revitalise the works council and increase its representation within the workforce.

The company's early HR initiatives featured the following:

- Silverbridge made sure its recruitment agencies, advertisements, and recruitment and selection procedures did not discriminate on the grounds of age.

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- For managerial staff, training focused on recruitment and anti-discriminatory employment practices. Other employees were also trained, formally or through informal mentoring, and new employees were 'shadowed' by more experienced workers.
- Employees were encouraged to continue working beyond state pension age, providing they were physically able. Silverbridge relocated any workers who could not continue working in their current jobs to more suitable work.

These HR practices enabled the company to recruit people in a sector that has always experienced serious staff shortages. Some initiatives – such as training, retention, and retirement arrangements – aimed to give employees high job satisfaction in positions they regarded as fulfilling. These initiatives have continued largely unchanged for many years.

In the past 10 years, these practices have become more formalised, as legislation requires standardised recruitment, selection, and training of carers. These more formalised procedures have had both positive and negative effects. As the public image of caregivers has improved, Silverbridge has benefited, because existing employees have become more committed. However, its formal procedures have discouraged some potential job applicants, thus hampering recruitment.

In parallel with these original HR initiatives, which still operate, three new initiatives have been introduced. These were introduced to deal with changes in the market arising from more demand for care services, shortfalls in labour supply, and to meet new legislative requirements.

- Ergonomic advancements: technological improvements in caregivers' equipment, along with more rigorous assessment of health and safety measures, ensuring all employees, especially older workers, are fully supported from an ergonomic point of view. This was a result of regulatory changes affecting most of Silverbridge's functions. These initiatives were introduced partly because local government and insurance companies demand ergonomic improvements, and partly because the company recognises good practice should include such improvements.
- Health and well-being: as part of the recruitment process, Silverbridge requires a declaration of health from each potential employee. This covers both physical and mental health to ensure the company has a profile of the worker's abilities before placing them in the most suitable post. Silverbridge introduced this practice mainly to meet legislative requirements, which regulate most of its processes. It has found the health declaration to be a very useful and valuable means of promoting employee health and well-being.

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- Long-term retention: in view of persistent labour shortages in the care sector, and the subsequent, constant loss of knowledge and expertise, Silverbridge developed several strategies to maintain its workforce. One strategy is the introduction of 'reward and recognition' programmes. These include bonuses, awards for carrying out specific tasks, benefit packages, and empowerment courses at local level. Another strategy is 'guaranteed hours contracts' which guarantee employees' working time. This is especially important for part-time or temporary workers, who need a sense of job continuity and stability. These strategies were introduced partly for competitive reasons, because of pressing labour shortages, and partly to make older employees feel valued by the organisation.

The Board of Silverbridge also has concerns about the UK's departure from the European Union (EU) and the impact this will have on the care sector in terms of staffing, regulation and funding. It believes the case for a more strategic and focused direction for the HR function is self-evident and needs to be further explored.

**As Director of HR Services within Silverbridge, you have been asked to write a briefing paper for the next Board Meeting covering the following issues.**

- 1. Critically evaluate the effectiveness of the company's current recruitment, selection and retention policies for care workers in the business.**
- 2. Argue the cases for and against Silverbridge Homecare adopting a named 'best practice' approach to HRM within the organisation (such as the Harvard model, the partnership model or any other best practice model, as examples).**
- 3. Critically analyse up to THREE advantages and up to THREE disadvantages facing the company when it recruits and seeks to retain overseas workers in the care business.**
- 4. Analyse the possible impacts of the UK's withdrawal from the EU on HR policies and practices in Silverbridge Homecare.**

*It is recommended that you spend 25% of your time on each of Tasks 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. There has been a reaction against bureaucracy and scientific management as ways of managing organisations in recent years. This is largely in response to the search for effective methods for the management of organisational change and the speed of change in contemporary societies. This is commonly called 'post-bureaucracy'.
  - i) Drawing upon research and/or current practice, explain and analyse the major features of post-bureaucratic organisations.
  - ii) To what extent is your organisation a post-bureaucracy (or is not a post-bureaucracy) and why?

**OR**

2. The traditional view of the company is that only the owners or shareholders are important, since companies have a binding duty to put shareholder needs first. Stakeholder theory, in contrast, argues other parties have interests in the organisation and their needs need to be taken account of by the management.
  - i) Identify the various stakeholders in your organisation with whom management interacts, and critically review the role they play.
  - ii) Using Mitchell's et al (1997) typology of stakeholders, critically examine each group of stakeholders in terms of their power to influence your organisation, the legitimacy of each stakeholder's relationship with the organisation, and the urgency of each stakeholder group's claim on the organisation.

**B**

3. Performance management is the system of HRM designed to motivate employees to perform in line with corporate goals. However, it is more than performance appraisal because it involves goal-setting and continuous feedback

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for employees. Performance management is thus a broader system of activities, of which performance appraisal is only one element.

- i) Drawing on research, critically review the performance management system in your organisation and comment on its effectiveness.
- ii) Suggest **UP TO THREE** ways in which your organisation's performance management system might be improved.

**OR**

4. You have received the following email from a newly-recruited junior colleague in your organisation:

*"Hello, people keep telling me I need to watch the managerial politics of our organisation, but I don't really understand what this means. Using examples and drawing on current practice, please explain the term managerial politics to me and tell me why it is important in our organisation."*

Draft a helpful response to this email.

**C**

5. You have been asked to give a talk to a group of first-year university students on 'The main features of the UK market economy today (or any other named market economy of your choice) and some implications for the HR function.'

Draft what you will say and justify your answer.

**OR**

6. Public management reform, sometimes described as administrative reform or new public management, has been an issue of intense scrutiny and review for over three decades. Policy initiatives such as competition, decentralisation, deregulation, marketisation, and quality initiatives within the public services have all been attempted. Each has had implications for the HR function.

Select any **THREE** public policy initiatives within the new public management agenda and critically review their impact on HR practices within the public services during this time.

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**D**

7. You have been asked to give a talk to a group of senior students in the local secondary (or high) school. The topic is “The case for and the case against migration into the UK (or in any other named country of your choice) and its impact on my organisation.”

Drawing on research, draft what you will say. Justify your answer.

**OR**

8. Technological change is a constant feature of the organisational context. It normally results in an increase in the efficiency of a product, service or process, which, in turn, creates an increase in economic output without any increase in economic input. Someone invents or improves a product, service or process, which is then used to provide a larger reward for the same amount of work.

Drawing upon current practice, identify any **ONE** recent technological change in your organisation and evaluate its impact on (a) productivity and (b) employment.

**E**

9. Businesses commonly attempt to influence the creation, revision and modification of government policies affecting their activities and economic interests through some sort of collective action.

- i) Explain (in a named country of your choice) the methods used by businesses to do this.
- ii) Critically review how your organisation tries to influence public policy making, or why it does not do this.

**OR**

10. Select any **ONE** piece of recent employment law (either statute or case law) and critically evaluate its impact on your organisation.

**END OF THE EXAMINATION**

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### Introduction

This report reviews the May 2018 sitting of the Human Resource Management in Context advanced level examination of the CIPD. This is a core module within the advanced level qualifications framework and draws upon the “Insights, Strategy and Solutions” professional area of the CIPD Profession Map.

On this occasion, 293 candidates sat the written examination, which was a relatively small cohort of examinees compared with recent examination diets. Of these 193 achieved a pass standard or higher giving an overall pass rate of 65.5%. This is approximately the same overall pass rate as September 2017 but lower than May 2017 and January 2018. The percentage of merit and distinction grades awarded has increased slightly over these three papers however the percentage of marginal fails has also increased with fewer fail grades. There is a wide variation in performance amongst centres and a large proportion of resit candidates on this occasion, The breakdown of grades is shown below.

<b>May 2018</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of total (to 1 decimal point)</b>
Distinction	8	2.7
Merit	42	14.3
Pass	145	49.1
Marginal fail	35	12.6
Fail	63	21.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>100.00</b>

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

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

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

**Section A**

*Learning outcomes: 3 and 5*

The case study is particularly intended to test in-depth knowledge and understanding of:-

- LO3: understand, analyse and critically evaluate the organisational and HR strategies that are shaped by and developed in response to internal and external environmental factors.
- LO5: understand, analyse and critically evaluate globalisation and international forces and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.

This section consisted of a seen case study with four tasks, where candidates were expected to answer all in a briefing paper format. The case-study was set in the context of a homecare organisation providing nursing and home care in 80 UK locations. The organisation faces some critical HR issues such as the effectiveness of recruitment, selection and retention policies and is concerned about the possible impact of future staff shortages as a result of withdrawal from the EU.

In responses to the case-study, candidates were expected to demonstrate M-level performance and the ability to develop logically structured and clearly focused responses to the tasks set. They were also expected to show familiarity with recent research and examples of current practice.

Generally candidate performance varied considerably across each task. Task two provided the greatest challenge to a large number candidates leading to a disappointing performance when answering this question and thus lower performance overall in Section A.

There are various ways in which this case could have been approached, but the practicality and depth of responses were more important than providing ideal solutions. The following commentary illustrates the types of issues that could be examined and developed in answers.

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**Task 1**

This task required candidates to evaluate the effectiveness of the company's current recruitment selection and retention policies for care workers in the business.

The company's current recruitment, selection and retention policies are a combination of its early initiatives in these areas and recent initiatives. These are driven by chronic shortages of labour in the external labour market. In principle, the positive outcomes of these initiatives include a greater sense of commitment to the organisation among existing staff, as well as a greater focus on employees' health and well-being and on increasing their motivation to remain in the organisation. However, the initiatives have brought more failures than successes, especially in terms of recruitment, largely because of scant regard for the formal procedures. Traditionally, in the care sector, recruitment, selection, training, and delivery of services have been conducted on an informal basis. As a result, some older employees have had trouble accepting the formalisation of these procedures and are reluctant to adopt new standardised practices in these areas. Lack of labour supply, along with the reluctance of the older workforce to accept the new regulated procedures, might prove detrimental to Silverbridge if some practical solutions are not devised and implemented in the future.

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates identified labour shortages in the external labour market and recognised that formal recruitment procedures were not followed appropriately. Good answers considered ways of attracting and recruiting younger workers by establishing closer links with schools and colleges. Possible ways of retaining staff were well considered by better candidates with ways of providing development and career opportunities. Better answers explained their points fully and provided a sound critical evaluation with appropriate suggestions for future policies and practices, weaker answers tended to provide descriptive responses and failed to address staff attitudes towards the new procedures.

**Task 2**

This task asked candidates to argue a case for and against the adoption of a named 'best practice' approach to HRM in the organisation.

Any 'best practice model' of HRM could be selected by candidates; these include high performance work systems, high commitment HR, high involvement HR or the Harvard model. The central case for supporting a best practice model in Silverbridge is that HR managers are able to promote a set of specific HR strategies and practices, which can bring about improved organisational performance in all organisations. Best practice typically emphasises three main themes: to enhance employee abilities or knowledge and skills through effective recruitment and selection and training; to motivate desired behaviours in the workplace, through strong

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incentives and to provide opportunities for better trained and motivated workers through job redesign and indirect forms of employee participation. As an example of 'best practice', the seven pillars of Pfeffer's human equation model are: employment security and internal labour markets, selective hiring and sophisticated selection, extensive training and development, employee involvement and employee voice, self-managed teams, high compensation contingent upon performance, and reduction of status differentials between staff. The main case against adopting Pfeffer's model in Silverbridge is that this set of HR bundles is too sophisticated for this organisation and its employees. In support of this observation, candidates could test the suitability and viability of each of Pfeffer's pillars (or others) and demonstrate their limitations (or otherwise) in the context of HR practices and outcomes within the organisation. A similar analysis can be applied in the case of adopting different bundles of HR within the organisation.

This task proved to be the most challenging in Section A with the question requiring candidates to argue a case for and against Silverbridge adopting a named 'best practice' approach to HRM within the organisation. Unfortunately too many answers failed to identify and use a 'best practice' model often confusing 'best practice' with 'best fit'. Better answers related well to the characteristics of an appropriate framework such as the Harvard model and Pfeffer's human equation model and related well to the situation described in the case study scenario.

**Task 3**

This asked candidates to critically examine advantages and disadvantages of recruiting and retaining overseas workers in the care business.

The advantages of recruiting and retaining overseas workers in the business include: overseas workers are commonly willing to accept lower wage rates; they provide a bank of experienced potential workers to choose from; unwanted domestic vacancies can be filled by overseas workers; contacts are important for recruiting purposes and overseas workers provide these contacts; overseas workers can help train local workers; and overseas workers are a safe option against discrimination laws. The disadvantages include: not being accepted by local workers; the possible absence of a common language in the workplace; neglecting local talent in the community; not all overseas workers are technically competent; and there is possible lack of commitment by some overseas workers.

This task provided some of the most consistent answers with most candidates able to identify three advantages and three disadvantages to the company of recruiting and retaining overseas workers. The best answers linked these directly with the case study and demonstrated relevance. A number of better answers cited evidence of the action taken by other care companies and the CQC's report on staffing problems in this sector.

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Weaker answers failed to relate well to the situation described at Silverbridge and often did not explore disadvantages such as the absence of a common language in the workplace and acceptance by local workers.

**Task 4**

This asked candidates to analyse the possible impacts of the UK's withdrawal from the EU on HR policies and practices in Silverbridge Homecare.

These include important staffing issues. Until the UK extracts itself from its obligations under EU treaties, government must clarify its intentions on the ability of EU nationals to work in social care roles in the UK, not least to avoid EU staff, who are currently working in the UK, deciding to leave to work in other countries. The chair of the UK Homecare Association has emphasised the importance of EU staff to the sector, where some employers argue social care services should retain the ability to recruit staff from the EU, when there are not enough resident workers to fill vacancies. In many important areas, the government will also need to clarify whether its intention is to repeal EU regulations and replace them with UK drafted alternatives or to continue to abide by them. A very important one is the European Working Time Directive, which was introduced to support the health and safety of workers by limiting the maximum amount of time that employees in any sector can work to 48 hours each week, as well as setting minimum requirements for rest periods and annual leave.

This question was generally well answered but did pose some problems for weaker candidates who failed to recognise possible problems and issues arising from staff shortages. Visas and work permits were considered by better candidates and the need to conform to the European Working Time Directive or the UK equivalent. Good answers considered possible changes to company policies and practices that would reassure staff of their right to stay in the UK and considered the use of financial and non-financial incentives to encourage staff to stay.

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**Section B**

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

**Question A1**

Learning outcome: 1

*LO1: understand, analyse and critically evaluate contemporary organisations and their principal environments*

According to Heckscher (1994), people in organisations need to be flexible in how they work in the light of rapid external change, resulting in a range of organisational forms. These include networked, virtual and post-modern organisations. Post bureaucracy for him has three main characteristics. First, organisational rules are superseded by consensus and dialogue-based personal influence rather than by status, with people being trusted to act on a basis of shared values rather than status not rules. Second, responsibilities are assigned based on competence for the tasks done rather than hierarchy and are dealt with personally, rather than impersonally. And third, post-bureaucratic organisations have open boundaries, with people coming into and out of organisations in flexible ways, such as through part-time, temporary and consultancy roles.

This question was slightly less popular than Question A2. Answers to the first part of this question were disappointing with a number of candidates failing to demonstrate a clear understanding of the concept. Good answers focussed well on post bureaucracy models such as the matrix and organic structures. Most candidates provided better answers to the second part of the question with the majority relating well to the bureaucratic structure prevailing in their organisation often with good examples to support their argument.

**Question A2**

Learning outcome: 1

*LO1 understand, analyse and critically evaluate contemporary organisations and their principal environments*

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This question relates to the candidate's own organisation, where the stakeholders are likely to include managers, employees, suppliers, creditors, customers and owners. The well-known Mitchell et al typology takes account of stakeholder power to influence the firm, the legitimacy of the stakeholder's relationship with the firm, and the urgency of the stakeholder's claim on the firm. This results in three classes of stakeholder – latent, expectant, and definitive – with low-salience, moderate-salience and high-salience attributes in turn.

The first part of this question was generally well answered with most candidates clearly identifying key stakeholders in their organisation. Good answers provided a sound critical review of the role they play. Answers to the second part of the question varied considerably with good answers relating well to Mitchell's (1997) et al typology however several candidates chose not to use this framework. This question required candidates to critically review organisational stakeholders and provide a critical examination of them using Mitchell's model.

**Question B3**

*Learning outcome: 2*

*LO2 understand, analyse and critically evaluate the managerial and business environment within which HR professionals work*

Candidates are expected to describe and outline the PMS in their own organisation and critically review its effectiveness. They then need to suggest three ways in which this PMS might be improved. Responses will be assessed therefore depending on the standard and adequacy of their critical review and what the weaknesses of the PMS are. Issues such as integration of the system, its effectiveness in managing organisational performance, and its effectiveness in managing employee performance are likely to be key criteria here.

This proved to be the most popular question in Section B and most candidates achieved a pass grade or better. Despite the direction given in the stem of the question weak answers focussed too much on performance appraisal with little attention given to objective setting and feedback. Better answers from candidates provided a sound critical review of PM in their organisation that included appropriate comments on its effectiveness but few cited relevant research to support in their answers.

**Question B4**

*Learning outcome: 2*

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*LO2 understand, analyse and critically evaluate the managerial and business environment within which HR professionals work*

Managerial politics reflect the pervasiveness of power as the central aspect of organisational life. Organisational politics is the process of mobilising power within organisations, where authoritative power ultimately rests with management. Various writers see the mobilisation of power as what happens when either individuals or groups make a claim against an organisation's resource-sharing system. These writers suggest power is central to the strategy process in organisations, because decisions about what strategy to determine is always political. Such decisions are likely to threaten the existing distribution of organisational resources in the control of tasks, people, information and new areas of business activity. Parties with organisational power seek to legitimise the proposals, ideas, values and the demands they espouse, whilst denying them to those they seek to oppose. This power is deployed in power 'games' within the organisation.

This was the least popular question and generally not well answered. Better answers tended to provide examples of power exercised in their organisation and the way in which power levers are used by managers when allocating resources. One or two answers delved into game theory and the importance of political behaviour in organisations.

**Question C5**

Learning outcome: 4

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

There is no single way of responding to this question; there are multiple approaches. The UK market economy is exactly that; that is an open economy driven forcibly by competitive markets. It is driven by reliance on price-driven markets, supply relations are at arm's length, and privatisation is high. Firms are driven by the search for profits and management is hierarchic. The dominant factor of production is finance capital, where banking and the finance sector are very important institutions. Those controlling capital are guided by market indicators, which are short term in their perspectives. Private welfare provisions are increasingly important. The HR implications include: moderate levels of labour mobility; poor skills in the labour market; low job security; weak union power; and the costs of recruitment and selection.

This again was a popular question with a wide range of marks awarded for a variety of approaches from candidates.

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A number of candidates misinterpreted this question and assumed that the requirement was to describe some of the economic factors and the state of the UK economy today. This approach included answers that provided views on the ageing population, austerity and living standards and failed to deal adequately with the question set. The few candidates providing good answers were able to demonstrate a sound understanding of open market principles and relate these well to HR policies procedures and practices.

**Question C6**

*Learning outcome: 4*

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

Other public service initiatives have included the focus on clients, efficiency, sweeping away bureaucracy, separating 'steering' from 'rowing' and others. The HR implications vary but include: replacing public administrators by public managers, managing downsizing and redundancies, giving managers more autonomy, training and development programmes, performance management and performance reviews, new skills to manage people, and recruiting, selecting and developing staff. In short, there is greater diversity in HR practices, more locally managed, and more flexible in its approach.

Very few answers to this question were provided but generally these relate well to public management reform and informed answers demonstrate the range of policy initiatives affecting the public services. Examples to illustrate the impact on HR practices were provided, often by those working in the public sector. Three appropriate public policy initiatives were identified by most candidates and their impact on HR initiatives critically reviewed. Most popular topics included HR policies relating to downsizing, performance management and workforce flexibility.

**Question D7**

*Learning Outcome: 6*

*LO6: understand, analyse and critically evaluate demographic, social and technological trends and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and processes.*

The basic arguments for economic migration into a country include: in response to an increase in demand for labour, unfulfilled by what is available locally; to help promote economic growth; to contribute to increased labour productivity; to provide a wider pool of labour available for work and employment, unsatisfied by local supply; and to

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fill important skills gaps in national labour markets. The case against migration into a national economy include: the impact of migration on the labour market in terms of levels of employment of the people already living there; the impact on public service provision; the impact on housing provision, certainly in the short term; the evidence that increasing the size of the total economy through migration does not necessarily contribute to increased national prosperity – it is the effect of migration on income per head of the resident population which is a more relevant factor; and the evidence here is that there are relatively few benefits for the incomes of the resident population.

Questions in this pairing appear equally popular and Question D7 was generally well answered with good examples of how migration impacted on their own workforce. However, little research evidence was provided to support arguments. Weak answers were generally too brief and did not provide sufficient evidence for the case for and against migration or provide examples of the impact on their organisation. Better answers argued the case for immigration by discussing how the skills gap could be filled, increased growth and GDP and the benefits of a diverse workforce. Arguments against include extra pressure on NHS and Schools and other services, overcrowding in urban areas and opposition from some members of the workforce.

**Question D8**

*Learning outcome: 6*

*LO6: understand, analyse and critically evaluate demographic, social and technological trends and how they shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and processes.*

Any single technological change can be identified, with candidates having to evaluate its impact on their organisation's productivity and employment. Historically, technological change in organisations is continuous and pervasive. These changes are aimed at increasing organisational productivity to achieve competitive edge in the marketplace, which may impact on jobs and employment both positively and negatively. New technologies, in short, may replace some jobs and skills or create new jobs and skills. Candidates can choose any single technological innovation in their organisation. The sorts of technology being adopted typically include digital, financial, information and communication, machine, logistics, vehicle, scientific equipment, and telecommunications technologies. This list is neither inclusive nor exhaustive.

Generally this question was well answered with a range of technological changes considered. ICT technologies which included iPads; video conferencing, employee attendance and performance monitoring systems were popular examples. One or two interesting variations considered robotics and their impact on productivity and employment. In better answers there was some consideration of both positive and

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negative implications for staff as well as the organisation. Some answers would have been strengthened if there was more comment on productivity issues rather than on employment issues, few gave thought to the effects on headcount and in what areas.

**Question E9**

*Learning Outcome: 7*

*LO7 Understand, analyse, and critically evaluate government policy and legal regulation and how these shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.*

In open, democratic societies, businesses typically become involved politically by joining and participating in organised pressure groups promoting their business interests. What distinguishes pressure groups from political parties is they seek to influence policy decisions, not get representatives into positions of formal political authority. Business pressure groups thus seek access to political decision makers at different power levels in society through lobbying, campaigning and extra-parliamentary action. The parties approached include: first ministers, government ministers, departmental ministers and civil servants, local councillors or other public officials. The methods and levels each pressure group uses to communicate its opinions and demands vary according to their power and circumstances. The most powerful pressure groups have almost instant access to important parts of the political system, such as employers' organisations but weak organisations improvise to make their views heard. The second part of this question relates to the candidates' own organisations.

A minority of candidates answered this question and answers were generally poor. Answers to part ii) were mostly weak with candidates unable to explain why their organisation does or does not attempt to affect policy making. There is evidence that candidates need to focus more on developing application capability. Better answers demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature of business pressure groups and methods used.

**Question E10**

*Learning outcome: 7*

*LO7 Understand, analyse, and critically evaluate government policy and legal regulation and how these shape and impact on organisational and HR strategies and HR practices.*

Any recent piece of employment law, such as a statutory development or a case law development, can be selected. Examples could include the national living wage, national minimum wage, gender pay gap reporting, and public-sector exit payments.

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Other examples include dismissals, discrimination in employment, and headscarves and religious symbols. This list is neither exclusive nor exhaustive.

This was not a popular question; employment law seems to be an area that candidates tend to avoid if possible. The most common areas of employment law chosen were the Equality Act, pension, auto-enrolment, gender, pay gap and GDPR. Weaker answers failed to provide an adequate description of the chosen area of law and did not provide an appropriate evaluation of its impact on their organisation. Better answers provide a more balanced discussion and evaluation with the impact of legal processes related to outcomes for individuals and the organisation resulting from the application of HR policies, procedures and practices. These answers often provided examples of the outcomes experienced and actions taken by line and HR managers.

**Conclusion**

As shown in the body of this report the pass rate in this examination diet was 65.8 %, very similar to the previous examination in September 2017. There were some very good scripts at distinction and merit levels but there were also a number of poor, fail and marginal fail scripts. The marginal fail scripts could be improved considerably by ensuring that answers are logically structured and clearly focussed responses to the questions set and show familiarity with recent research and examples of current practice.

This examination team believes this paper provided a good test of all the learning outcomes and the indicative content of this unit and it was a fair test of candidate knowledge and the application of knowledge within the module. The following general points follow from feedback provided by the team in assessing candidates in this written examination.

1. To repeat a point made in Professor David Farnham's previous examiner reports, candidates are expected to provide evidence-based answers to the questions set, drawing upon relevant research and good practice of HRM in its contexts. Candidates are expected to read around the subject matter of the module and provide informed, justified answers to the questions set and need to supplement their studies through wider reading. These sources include academic journals, professional periodicals, and the quality press, as indicated on many occasions by the Chief examiner.
2. There is evidence that better candidates performed well in the case-study section where they had conducted research into the contexts and content of the case-study organisation. In this examination Task 2 in Section A proved to be most challenging to candidates leading to a disappointing overall mark for weak

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candidates. Poor answers indicated that candidates had failed to demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding of the chosen framework and failed to adequately apply the concept to the situation described in the case study.

3. Weaker answers often contained arguments that were muddled and did not analyse or critically evaluate the situation described in the case study. The opportunity and ability of students to anticipate and prepare for likely examination topics as a result of the issuing of the case study in advance of the examination appears to vary across centres. Better performing centres appear to encourage discussion and information-sharing between candidates, which clearly results in better answers to the questions posed in the examination. The need for candidates to prepare robustly and effectively when they receive the case study is imperative. The importance of attempting past examination questions should be re-emphasised.
4. Turning to Section B of the examination, the performance of candidates was generally slightly weaker in this section than in Section A. The questions in Section B were in similar topic groupings as in previous examinations; however, Questions B4 and C6 were the most unpopular possibly because these topics have not been tested very often and were not anticipated. All questions across the paper offered candidates plenty of opportunity to do well. The overall impression is the lower marks obtained in Section B are not due to lack of knowledge and understanding of the topics set, but the inability of candidates to apply their knowledge and produce effective, evidence-based answers to them. Several centres could improve their pass rates by providing students with more development opportunities in skills analysis, critical evaluation, and reflective justification.
5. Areas where candidates need to be better informed, based on this examination, are: managerial and business environment within which HR professionals work (in this case managerial power and politics) and the market and competitive environment. It is also disappointing to note that a number of candidates failed to answer 5 questions in Section B and several answered both questions in the same subsection. As indicated above the ability to critically examine or review the available evidence must be demonstrated at M level and marginal candidates would be well advised to focus more on this requirement. There is still a significant number of marginal candidates who struggle to provide any critical review, or do not respond to all parts of questions set.
6. It is the view of the examining team that this examination tested the indicative content and learning outcomes of this module with a good spread of questions covering the learning outcomes well. Appropriate critical analysis, evaluation and justification when required is still absent from too many answers as candidates appear to be much more secure providing descriptive answers.

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I'd like to acknowledge and thank my fellow team of examiners and staff at CIPD for making special efforts to ensure the quality and speed of the assessment process conformed to the high standards set by Chief examiner, Professor David Farnham who sadly passed away just before the May examination diet. Although deeply affected by his passing their support throughout the marking process and the standardisation meeting is much appreciated.

**Alan Peacock**

National examiner