

**Series 3 Examination 2007**

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## **ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS**

**Level 3**

**Monday 11 June**

Subject Code: 3041

Time allowed: **3 hours**

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

- Answer **all 4** questions.
- All questions carry equal marks.
- All answers should be correctly numbered, but do not need to be in numerical order.
- Adequate and appropriate communication is more important than a particular number of words.
- Check your work carefully.
- You may use an English or bilingual dictionary.

## QUESTION 1

### Situation

You are employed in the Public Relations Department of *Supasoaps*, a company manufacturing various soap and related products. The company has recently launched a new product called *Funsoap*. The product is aimed at children; it is in the shape of baby animals and it changes colour as it is used, thus encouraging the children to use it more. *Funsoap* has been well received by the public.

Your manager, Mrs Anke Kugler, has given you the following letter from a less satisfied customer.

8<sup>th</sup> June 2007

19 Central Boulevard  
Northville  
BVS 6AS

Dear Sir or Madam

Funsoap

I note with interest that you have launched a soap product that changes colour as it is used. I believe that this is a very good idea – but, in fact, it is my idea. I wrote to you two years ago giving details of this. As I was a chemist before I retired I even gave you some suggestions about how the product could be manufactured. I received a non-committal response from you at the time so you can imagine my surprise when I learned that you had actually introduced the product.

I would prefer not to take legal action at this time but I believe I am entitled to be paid a fee for my idea. I'm sure you are making large profits from selling *Funsoap*.

Yours faithfully

*Adam Martins*

Adam Martins (Mr)

Mrs Kugler says this to you.

"I'd like you to write to Mr Martins. We'd better be careful what we say as we don't know if he genuinely believes he invented the product or if this is just an attempt to get some money from us.

"The problem is that, as you know, we lost all our paper files of customers' letters when we had the fire in the office last year so we can't really check on what he says. But have a word with our Product Research Manager, George Dupont. He'll be able to tell you where the ideas behind the product were developed. Be as polite as you can to Mr Martins, of course, but don't admit to anything that could be damaging to us."

Mr Dupont says this to you.

"I've no recollection of any letter from a customer about *Funsoap* but it has been in the development stage for over four years. In fact, we tried an earlier version about three years ago but we had to withdraw it. The different colour soaps dissolved at different rates, so the soap didn't work. Our laboratory staff have worked hard since then and we've finally got over the problem. To be honest, the idea of colour-changing soap is not very original but we are the only company that has managed to produce a soap that changes colour evenly. And aren't the baby animals great? No one ever thought of that. I think the rabbit is really cute!"

## QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

### Task

**Write the letter** to Mr Martins as requested. You can assume that the company's headed notepaper is used but you should include all other components of a business letter.

**(Total 25 marks)**

## QUESTION 2

### Situation

You are employed in the Finance Department of a large company, *BFE Products*. Generally, the staff of the company work well together but two days ago two employees in the Accounts Section, Ernest Franks and Lee Boland, had a heated argument which ended in a prolonged confrontation. Both were suspended from duty pending further investigations.

The Head of the Finance Department, Ms Brenda Katona has asked you to investigate this incident with the following instructions.

"I've heard so many rumours and exaggerated reports of this incident that I would like you to look into it and put your findings into a report for me. This will help me when I speak to our legal department to decide what action we should take. It will be very helpful if you assemble the facts into a proper order – please start by giving background to the dispute and then describe what happened and who saw this. Obviously I'm not asking you to make any recommendations but if your report can be in a clear and helpful order, I'd be very grateful."

You have not spoken directly to the two individuals concerned but the notes from your interviews with others are as follows.

#### From an interview with the Head of Accounts Section

Unfortunately I was out of the office when the incident took place. As you know there are normally four of us in the office, myself, Lee, Ernest and young Kylie, our latest recruit. I know Lee and Ernest are not the best of friends and they had been arguing earlier in the morning about something silly – I think it was about football. I was on my way back to the office when I heard Kylie shouting. When I got back, Lee and Ernest were both shouting and swearing at each other – I don't know who actually started the argument, but it had clearly got out of hand. I thought something worse could result so I tried to separate them.

#### From an interview with Kylie Robert

It was a dreadful experience. Mr Franks and Mr Boland had been arguing in a light hearted way but I then heard Mr Boland say something about Mr Franks' family which wasn't very nice. This was at about 10.45. Mr Franks seemed to lose his temper and started shouting at Mr Boland. They both started swearing at each other and made all kinds of threats, so much so that I called security. I hate it here now – the atmosphere is dreadful. Unless something is done I will be leaving.

#### From an interview with the Head of the Human Resources Department

I know some of the information on our files is confidential, but I can say a couple of things that might help you. Lee Boland has been working here for 11 years now and he has had two warnings about his behaviour. We moved him out of the Salaries and Wages Office a year or so ago because he didn't get on very well with the other staff. He's a very good worker really, but he can say some very unfortunate things and he does use a bit of bad language. Ernest Franks is much older but he has only been with us for four years. He has had some family problems recently and I know he's under a lot of pressure at home. His record is exemplary, however.

#### From an interview with a member of security staff

Shortly after quarter to eleven I received a call that there was a dispute in the Accounts Office. When I got there I could see a heated argument was taking place and the Head of the Section was attempting to stop it. I could see that one man, who staff were calling "Ernie" was almost out of control while the other man who I know as Lee Boland seemed to be more in control. They were both using abusive language so I asked both men to leave the office as they were causing offence. I escorted them to the staff room. Ernie seemed to calm down and expressed regret to me about what had happened, but Lee was saying something about how he would "get back at Franks"

## QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

### Task

**Write the report** as requested. You can use any report layout but you should report on what happened in an appropriate way.

**(Total 25 marks)**

### QUESTION 3

#### Situation

You are employed by a large company that makes great use of the latest technology in its applications and systems. The company is fairly traditional in that staff attend the workplace during normal working hours but management are considering if they can make greater use of staff working from their own homes.

You have been asked to investigate this and you recently came across the following article which summarises many of the issues you are considering.

#### **Home Working Solutions**

In a business world that is becoming increasingly competitive and also much more technology-based, more and more businesses are turning towards staff carrying out some or even all of their work from home. This should not be seen as a negative development as flexible working brings many tangible benefits to both companies and their employees.

The possibilities of increasing home working have come about with the advanced communications infrastructure of companies. It has long been recognised that an employee based at a work station at home can access applications that are fully integrated with the systems of the company. For many administrative staff in particular, they can contact colleagues and customers inside and outside the organisation and pass on and receive information in whatever format is required. Clearly some personal contact might be lost but dialogues can take place over the telephone. If visual contact is required the latest technology can allow you to transmit pictures to a receiver who, in turn, can return visual images to you.

It should be said that many organisations that have the technology to develop home working have not done so because they feel there are disadvantages. For example, industrial psychologists advise us that people take up employment for many reasons. For some employees, the financial rewards of working are not the prime motivator, but the companionship of their fellow workers, which would be lost with home working. This argument has some validity but the fellowship of the workplace has already been diluted by the changes to working practices. Even within an office, the worker is increasingly isolated as he or she does not have to leave the workstation to function efficiently.

For many workers, this possible loss of human contact is more than compensated for by the inherent advantages of home working. It is very likely that you can adopt a more flexible approach to your work at home and carry out your tasks around your domestic or social arrangements. Families in which only one person works are now rare, and so there is a great appeal for workers to be able, for example to, take the children to school, look after aged relatives or simply carry out work at a time of day in which they are most comfortable.

A home worker does not have to face the increasingly daunting and expensive task of commuting or travelling to work, something that can take up several hours a week in large cities. These workers have fewer limitations in deciding where they will live and changing employment need not mean moving house if home working arrangements continue.

For companies, a major benefit will be happier, more motivated and therefore more productive staff. Also, there are cost implications, as companies might not need to keep all their premises or office space. Of course, for a large proportion of the population home working will never be a viable proposition; workers involved in a production process or providing a face to face service must attend an appropriate workplace. But for many staff home working is a genuine alternative to travelling in to the workplace and as it becomes more common, companies might be forced to offer this in order to attract and retain key personnel.

### QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

#### Task

Using the information in the article answer **in your own words as far as possible** the questions that follow.

- (a) Why should home working not be seen as “a negative development”? (3 marks)
- (b) What has brought about the possibility of more staff working from home? (3 marks)
- (c) What kind of communication is lost when home working takes place and how can this be avoided? (3 marks)
- (d) Why might home working be unpopular for some employees? (2 marks)
- (e) In what circumstances would staff find working from home very appealing? (3 marks)
- (f) In what ways does the home worker benefit from the lack of a need to travel to work? (3 marks)
- (g) Explain two reasons why companies could benefit if staff work from home? (4 marks)
- (h) From what you have read in the article use your ideas to suggest a job or a type of job that is suitable for a home worker. Give your reasons why the work is suitable and how all those involved could benefit from home working. (4 marks)

**(Total 25 marks)**

## QUESTION 4

### Situation

You work in the offices of *Foodfare*, a store selling a wide range of food in your area. The store is famous for its high quality fresh food but also its vast range of packaged and tinned food from all over the world.

You are aware that there has recently been a great deal of unfavourable publicity about some practices carried out in the fishing industry in some parts of the world. It is known that some fishing fleets attempting to catch tuna fish have caught other sea creatures in their nets, particularly dolphins. This has reduced the population of some sea creatures in various areas to levels where they are close to extinction. A recent television programme named several companies that produced tinned fish as being involved in these practices and, unfortunately, *Foodfare's* name was also mentioned as a company selling these products. Today, the store's manager, Mr John Capaldi, said this to you.

"No doubt you've heard about this tuna fish business. It's got a bit out of proportion, really, I would say, but I can see why some people feel strongly. None of us would like to think that sea creatures like dolphins are in danger. Anyway, I believe I've managed to resolve things. We have had complaints from customers and even from staff, so I think it is now time to put things straight.

"First of all, I've checked very carefully and only one of our suppliers, *Tip Top Tuna*, could be accused of anything doubtful. All our other suppliers have impeccable credentials and have never been accused of anything other than fishing legally and responsibly. I've told our canned food department to take all *Tip Top Tuna* products off the shelves and not sell them anymore.

"What we now need to do is reassure our staff and customers. I'd like you to draft a memo to our staff explaining what we've done, and why we've done it. One of our staff did mention that at least one customer brought back some tinned tuna and demanded a refund. I'm not too sure what we should do when this happens. Oh, alright, I'll make a decision now to let staff give a refund on any *Tip Top Tuna* products, but nothing else. We won't advertise this but I suppose it is fair.

"Please advise staff that they need to deal with this in a sensitive manner but let them know why they can reassure all customers. Come to think of it, it might not be a bad idea if we produced a few notices that we could display in our tinned food department. We shouldn't mention any company names here – I know our legal department is now going to consider what action we might take – but a general reassurance about our policy and our products will be useful. This will also support our staff. If you produce an outline of the notice I can get our specialist office staff to produce it."

### Tasks

- (a) **Produce the memo** that could be sent to all staff, as instructed. (17 marks)
- (b) **Draft a notice** as requested. (8 marks)

**(Total 25 marks)**