Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification
Leading, Managing and Developing People

January 2019

Date: 24 January 2019	**Time: 09:50 – 13:00 hrs**

Time allowed – Three hours and ten minutes
(Including ten minutes' reading time)

Instructions

- Answer **all** of Section A.
- Answer **five** questions in Section B (**one** per subsection).
- Read each question carefully before answering.
- Write clearly and legibly.

Information

- Questions may be answered in any order.
- Equal marks are allocated to each section of the paper.
- Within Section B equal marks are allocated to each question.
- If a question includes reference to 'your organisation', this may be interpreted as covering any organisation with which you are familiar.
- The case study is not based on an actual organisation. Any similarities to known organisations are coincidental.

You will fail the examination if:

- You fail to answer five questions in Section B (one per subsection) **and/or**
- You achieve less than 40% in either Section A or Section B **and/or**
- You achieve less than 50% overall.

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<u>SECTION A – Case Study</u>

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.

Interrobang Communications is a sizeable provider of internet and telecommunications services operating principally in the UK market. Fifteen years ago senior managers took the decision to outsource a number of activities to subcontractors in order to reduce costs. This included a good deal of its basic 'back office' administrative activities, including HRM services which have since been provided on a five year rolling contract by a 200-strong team of staff working out of an office in Essex. At the same time Interrobang closed its UK contact centre which operated as a first port of call for all customer enquiries. This work was sub-contracted to an operator based in Bangalore, India which now employs 450 people to work on Interrobang business. Ten people who are directly employed by Interrobang also work in this Bangalore operation managing the relationship with the contractor and dealing with some of the more complex customer enquiries.

A new senior management team has now decided to bring these two core business activities back in-house. Their reasons are partly financial and partly relate to complaints from customers and employees about the inconsistent quality of the services that are being provided by each of the subcontractors.

High levels of wage inflation in India are making it impossible for the Bangalore-based supplier to offer a sufficiently high quality service at an affordable price. There have been a lot of customer complaints about the time they have to wait for their calls to be answered and the apparent inability of people answering the calls to deal with some enquiries promptly or effectively. Customers have switched to other service providers as a result. Interrobang will have to pay a lot more simply to continue with this unreliable service if it renews its contract next year, so the decision has been taken to re-open its own UK-based contact centre and to employ directly all the staff working there. This will mean terminating its contract with the Indian sub-contractor in October 2019.

Quality concerns have also been an issue in relation to Interrobang's business service provider contract with the Essex-based subcontractor. However, an additional problem here is the negative publicity that this company has recently been attracting. It boasts about its capacity to provide high quality HR services, yet appears to treat its own employees poorly. It has got into a very public argument with a trade union that is pushing for recognition and has been involved in a high profile equal pay dispute which is about to be the subject of formal legal action. Complaints have been made by staff about limited attention to health and safety issues, the employment of inexperienced line managers, an inflexible approach to hours of work and its practice of monitoring how much time staff spend on toilet breaks. Levels of staff retention and engagement at the subcontractor are poor and this is having a negative impact on service quality. Moreover, Interrobang no longer wishes to be associated with this company on reputational grounds. Interrobang accepts that it will have to offer jobs in its new in-house operation to all those who currently work full-time on its contracts for the Essex-based subcontractor, but they believe that performance levels can be lifted with more professional management.

Interrobang has found a site at which it plans to house both these formerly outsourced business activities together under one roof. A substantial new office building with state-of-the-art telecommunications equipment is being constructed on an industrial estate close to Newport in South Wales. The new facility, once fully operational in 2020, will employ 750 people to work mostly in contact centre roles. The company is keen to improve service quality substantially for both its customers and employees, and while it accepts that costs will rise somewhat, these objectives needs to achieve within some fairly tough budgetary constraints.

You have been appointed to a HR advisor post working for Interrobang. You will initially be based with a small team of colleagues in an office building adjacent to the new Newport building, but once it is completed you will move across there together with new staff, those who are relocating from Essex and a small team of more senior people who will be relocating from Bangalore to help ensure a smooth transition.

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You are asked to write a briefing paper for the HR Director of Interrobang which addresses the following questions.

1. **Identify the major attributes Interrobang should seek when recruiting staff to work in its new Newport operation? What recruitment and selection methods should be used?**

2. **Assess the particular challenges you think Interrobang will face when transferring staff from the operations in Bangalore and Essex to its new in-house facility in Newport? How should these be addressed?**

3. **In addition to those discussed in the first two questions, specify one other major HR intervention you would recommend that Interrobang introduces in order to help ensure that its new operations offer a consistently higher service than those offered by the two subcontractors?**

In each case, take care to provide a good justification for your recommendations, drawing on published research and examples where possible.

It is recommended that you spend roughly a third of your time on each of Questions 1, 2 and 3.

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 2018 the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) published a research report entitled 'Diversity and Inclusion at Work: Facing up to the business case'. Here it was argued that while there is some evidence in support of the view that diversity in organisations is associated with superior business performance, it is patchy and inconclusive. We cannot therefore state with confidence that pursuing greater inclusion and promoting diversity in an organisation will always lead directly to improved financial performance. The report's authors go on to argue that this should not deter HR managers from actively promoting diversity and championing inclusive practices because there are a multitude of other beneficial effects for individuals, employers and wider society.

    i.   How far do you agree with the view that it is right for HR managers to pursue policies and practices aimed at improving diversity and inclusion even though this may have no positive impact on financial performance in their organisations? Justify your answer.

AND

    ii. Set out **THREE** distinct initiatives in this area that you would like to see your organisation adopt. In each case explain who you would expect to benefit and how.

OR

2. The idea that 'best practices' in Human Resource Management can be identified and should be implemented has been influential. Those who advocate this idea often argue that all HR managers should look carefully at how HRM is practiced in the most successful and fastest growing global companies with a view to adopting the same approaches in their own organisations. The assumption is that there is a recipe of effective HRM that is used in these organisations and which helps explain their success. It follows that its adoption in any organisation will enhance their chances of enjoying sustained competitive advantage over time.

    i.   Drawing on research and examples of organisational practice explain how far you agree with this way of thinking about HRM. Justify your answer.

       AND

    ii. How far does your organisation take a 'best practice approach' to HRM? Illustrate your answer with examples.

PLEASE TURN OVER

B

3. You attend a local CIPD meeting at which the speaker argues that the most difficult long-term challenge facing today's HR managers is finding a way of reconciling the seemingly contradictory demands for greater flexibility and high levels of employee commitment. She asks why our employees should be expected to demonstrate greater levels of commitment to their employers when their employers are showing less commitment to them. She cites two situations she thinks are problematic:

- the growth in forms of insecure work such as short-term contracts, agency working and zero-hours contracts;

- a tendency for organisations to invest a great deal of effort into securing employee commitment to strategies and sets of values only to switch direction soon afterwards.

i. To what extent do you agree that this is the most difficult challenge facing HRM managers in many industries? Justify your answer.

AND

ii. What can managers do to secure employee commitment in volatile and less predictable business environments? Illustrate your answer with examples.

OR

4. Research into employee engagement persistently shows that a major contributing factor is the extent to which employees are given autonomy to carry out their work in the ways they want to. A link is also often made to team-working and the need to allow teams maximum freedom to operate in ways that suit them. Very rigid, inflexible approaches to management, particularly when combined with unnecessary, close supervision tend to be associated with low levels of employee engagement.

Evaluate the extent to which your organisation encourages autonomy among the individuals and teams it employs. To what extent is a good balance achieved between the need to supervise effectively and the need to maximise levels of employee engagement? Illustrate your answer with examples.

C

5. Most established research into the qualities associated with effective leadership in organisations has focused on three distinct sets of requirements:

- cognitive requirements (i.e.: the ability to make sound decisions and exercise judgement)

- social requirements (i.e.: the capacity to inspire, persuade and engage others)

- self-motivational requirements (i.e.: the desire to take on leadership responsibilities)

Key findings are first that in order to be a highly successful leader a person needs to demonstrate all three of these, and secondly that each can be identified in people at an early stage in their careers. Once individuals with leadership potential have been identified they can be provided with opportunities to build up relevant experience.

i. To what extent do you consider that the people who lead your organisation (or the part of it you work in) meet all three of these sets of requirements? Justify your answer.

AND

ii. What methods are best to use when looking to identify future leadership potential in colleagues who are at the start of their careers? Justify your answer

OR

6. You receive the following e-mail from a senior HR manager in your organisation:

'Hello. I have just heard a presentation about the dangers of 'toxic leadership'. It is a growing problem in some organisations apparently. People in senior positions often act unethically, they abuse and bully their teams, put their own personal interests before those of their organisations, ignore long-term problems and neglect the welfare of employees.' Could you prepare a briefing paper for me on this which addresses the following:

i. *What concrete steps could we as an HR team take to reduce the chances that a 'toxic leader' might get appointed and then be able to act destructively?*

AND

ii. *What business case could we put forward to support spending some money implementing these steps?*

What main points would you make in your briefing paper and why?

D

7. The senior management team in your organisation has decided to increase the budget that will be dedicated to training and development activities in the coming financial year. £5000 has been allocated immediately. They are determined that these monies will be spent productively, providing a good long-term return on investment. You are one of a number of colleagues who is asked to suggest how the increased budget should be spent.

What suggestions would you make? Justify your answer indicating what form the return on investment will take.

OR

8. Many organisations use some form of punitive approach as their main method of tackling absence. They apply strict rules on sick pay, hold formal return to work interviews after all episodes of absence, require that medical certificates are produced and take formal disciplinary action when certain, defined trigger points are met. However, some researchers have suggested that alternative approaches are more effective at bringing absence levels down. These include rewarding people whose attendance record is excellent, trying to screen out people who are prone to take a lot of absence at the employee selection stage, making work more enjoyable and a wide variety of wellness initiatives aimed at reducing the incidence of sickness among employees.

i. Critically evaluate the different approaches your organisation uses to manage absence. Which do you consider to be the most effective and why?

AND

ii. Drawing on research and examples of practice, explain how far you agree with the critics of punitive approaches to the management of absence. Justify your answer.

E

9. The philosopher John Rawls (1973) famously distinguished between different types of justice, all of which can potentially inform management practice in organisations. The form which is of most practical relevance to HRM is 'procedural justice'. It means that when decisions are taken which affect others it is important that fair processes are used. Moreover, these must also be seen to operate fairly. When this is not the case, managers lose legitimacy and this can have a range of longer-term negative consequences for them and their organisations.

    i.   What core principles should underpin an approach to HRM which complies with the notion of procedural justice? Illustrate your answer with examples.

        AND

    ii.   What damaging long-term consequences may result when HR managers are perceived not to be operating systems which are procedurally just?

OR

10. The CIPD's 'Code of Professional Conduct' contains nineteen statements which between them set out the behaviours and standards the Institute expects its members to meet. The first statement on the list reads as follows:

"Maintain professional knowledge and competence through continuing professional development, to ensure they provide a professional, up to date and insightful service."

    i.   Explain why the need to practice extensive 'continuous professional development' (CPD) is given such a prominent position in the CIPD's code.

    ii.   Set out and justify THREE distinct steps that you will take regularly once you have completed your educational qualification to maintain your own CPD.

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END OF EXAMINATION

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EXAMINER'S REPORT

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Introduction

A total of 179 candidates sat the 7LMP examination in January, and as has been the case with most recent cohorts they performed most impressively as a group. The overall pass rate was 82%. Answers to both Section A and Section B were, on the whole strong and effective. There were relatively few poor fails and plenty of merits.

The final breakdown of marks was as follows:

January 2019		
Grade	**Number**	**Percentage of total**
Distinction	7	4
Merit	47	26
Pass	93	52
Marginal Fail	5	3
Fail	27	15
Total	**179**	**100**

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Section A

Learning Outcomes:

LO4: Contribute to the promotion of flexible working and effective change management in organisations.

LO6: Assess the contribution made by HRM and HRD specialists in different types of organisation.

Task 1:

The key here is to recruit a team who are capable of doing a range of contact-centre based roles to a high standard. They are thus going to need to be intelligent and articulate with good basic IT and customer-handling skills. They will also have to be able to work under some pressure, be good timekeepers and effective team members. Practicalities such as an ability to commute to the new office building and to work flexibly in a twenty-four hour operation are also key characteristics. These are not in the main going to be highly paid roles, so it is not going to be possible to attract people who live too far outside of South East Wales. Relevant experience will be a great advantage, but with many of these kinds of roles it is not as necessary as full training can be provided. Personal attitudes and attributes are more important. When answering the second part of the question the strongest answers took good account of potential costs when suggesting recruitment and selection methods and gave a good business-focused justification for their choices. Some lost marks by focusing very heavily on selection at the expense of recruitment. The most commonly suggested approaches involved advertising online and through job centres. For selection it was good to read some very thoughtful answers in which methods such as work sampling and trainability testing were justified most effectively.

As is always the case with Section A answers we are impressed to see evidence of wider research, for example candidates who could write with some authority about current labour market conditions in South Wales and major employers operating in the Newport area. Also – as is usual – some candidates either wrote pre-prepared answers which are not related wholly to the particular question, or wrote very theoretically about good practice in recruitment and selection without relating their suggested approaches to the specifics of this case. Marks were often lost accordingly.

Task 2:

There were two major issues to consider here aside from the practicalities associated with relocating (housing, travel etc). First were issues of cultural adjustment, particularly for the small team transferring from Bangalore. In order to ensure that this works successfully considerable attention needs to be given to pre-expatriation / repatriation preparation, followed by sophisticated and personalised induction and socialisation arrangements with ongoing support thereafter. For both groups there also needs to be involvement in decision-making in order to secure high levels of engagement once the new operation opens. The

second set of activities are developmental. There is a need to raise performance standards. So some targeted re-training activity required focused on customer service and expected quality standards. The stronger answers addressed both these sets of points, also giving proper and full attention to both groups of employees (Essex and Bangalore) who may be transferring into the new teams. It was good to see knowledge of TUPE regulations on display here, but some candidates tended to focus so much on the legal points as to neglect the wider HR issues when addressing this question.

Task 3:

There was plenty of scope here for candidates to advance an original argument in support of their suggested intervention. As a result all kinds of different HR interventions were advanced effectively. The main problem was a tendency to write in general terms about an area (reward, performance management, wellbeing etc) without linking points very clearly to facts set out in the case study, but most candidates avoided this. A lot focused effectively on the role that reward practices might play in securing employee engagement and quality performance in the new operation. Others focused on employee relations issues or flexible working or change management more generally. All these could form the basis of good answers, as was the case with HRD interventions too. What mattered as far as marks were concerned was that the candidate articulated a clear suggestion which was practical and not overly costly, going on to justify their suggested intervention effectively. As always it was important that the justification is business-oriented and does not merely focus on ethics or employee interests. Some candidates ignored the requirement in the question to focus in depth on one intervention, choosing instead to identify three or four. The inevitable result was limited originality and justification, and hence fewer marks.

Section B

Question A1

Learning Outcome: LO1 Review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD.

There was plenty of room here for debate and hence no right or wrong answers. What mattered was that a sound argument was advanced and justified effectively. This question aimed to tap into the heart of the debate about the purpose of business in society, whose interests business organisations should serve and to what extent. Stronger answers acknowledged that while the business case for diversity and inclusion may be limited in terms of evidence for direct financial returns on investment, there are nonetheless wider benefits that can accrue for businesses that promote diversity and inclusion in terms, for example, of corporate reputation, the capacity to attract and retain staff, greater creativity, better understanding of markets etc. These benefits are not easy to measure, but still potentially significant. In any event a good argument could be advanced based on social justice for all organisations, including commercial organisations operating in highly competitive business environments, to improve their record on diversity and inclusion provided that it does not damage their financial performance, by for example costing a great deal for no apparent return. Weaker answers tended to miss the main point behind this question and simply made out a business case, or in some cases a legal case. These were often well-informed and had relevance, but did not constitute the full and direct answers that gain the highest marks.

In part two any three initiatives could be set out. It was important, however, that they were distinct and not simply three examples of the same kind of approach. The CIPD report suggests reviewing the language used in recruitment advertisements to cut out inadvertent bias and ensuring that jobs are advertised as widely as possible, examining recruitment data to identify opportunities for improving diversity, a variety of management training initiatives, greater creativity in flexible working initiatives and the need regularly to review organisational cultures with a view to making them more inclusive.

Question A2

Learning Outcome: LO1 Review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD.

There was plenty of scope here for candidates to critique the theory and to develop their own arguments and the strongest answers did this with some confidence. While best practice thinking has been highly influential it has many flaws, not least the fact that the most successful global organisations use a variety of different HRM approaches and philosophies. Amazon is a lot more hard-headed and efficiency-driven than Google with its high performance work practices and application of highly sophisticated HR thinking. Both are highly successful. The extent to which there is such a thing as 'best practice' is thus questionable. A best fit approach in which organisations decide what is 'best for them' may

have greater salience. That said, of course, we have a great deal of research evidence which supports the best practice recipe idea. In general, despite the exceptions, the more successful organisations do appear to use the same range of HR interventions.

In part two answers varied greatly. The more thoughtful and well-justified an answer was, the higher the mark awarded. It was important that candidates demonstrated a broad understanding of the debate about best practice and the contents of the much cited 'bundle of best practices', as well as good knowledge of their own organisations.

Question B3

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

There is a good case to be made in favour of the proposition that reconciling flexibility and commitment is a very considerable challenge, if not the very most difficult one, at least in industries where there is increasing volatility and hence a reliance on people who are employed on forms of flexible or non-standard contract. HR managers are under pressure to meet two apparently irreconcilable aims – namely increased commitment manifested in measures such as reduced staff turnover, higher levels of employee engagement, discretionary effort, the ability to attract good performers etc, and increased agility (i.e.: change-ready mindsets, flexible approaches to headcount, less job security). Of course there are other challenges that could be and were also used as the basis for arguments here too (e.g.: diversity, internationalisation, technological change, skills shortages etc). Candidates were free to develop whatever arguments they wished to. As always, what distinguished the stronger from the weaker answers was the extent to which these were compellingly advanced and justified.

Part two could also be answered in different ways. One commonly discussed approach is focused on the management of expectations. If managers avoid raising expectations about job security and stability in the first place, the deal they are establishing with their employees is clear and expectations will not be dashed so readily. Many people are, after all, highly committed to their work while also being self-employed or employed on an agency basis. It is possible to achieve both outcomes, if challenging. It is also possible for managers to be very transparent about volatility and to say to employees that they commit to doing what they can in the areas of job security and the protection of terms and conditions within the restrictions of their business environments. There are plenty of forms of working which give managers plenty of flexibility while also being appealing to many employees (e.g.: part-time working, flexi-time, annual hours etc).

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Question B4

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

Answers here clearly varied very considerably depending on the extent to which candidates' own organisations do or do not encourage autonomy. Indeed, there is often a good variety of practice within the same organisation as some forms of autonomous working are determined by line managers rather than organisations and can thus vary considerably between departments. The position can also change over time as managers who are more and less controlling in their approach come and go. What mattered here was that candidates presented a full and credible analysis which evaluated and did not simply describe what happens in their own organisations. Both questions needed to be thoughtfully addressed and examples provided to support the arguments being put forward. Some candidates were rather stronger on the first point than they were on the second about the striking of a 'good balance' and this led some to lose marks here unnecessarily.

Question C5

Learning Outcome: L03 Debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations.

Answers to the first part varied considerably, weaker answers being rather too descriptive at times or failing to focus on the specific qualities discussed in the question stem. These were really interesting to mark because of this variety. Stronger papers made a distinction between different individuals and also to focus on different qualities when discussing individual leaders. It is rare for people to exhibit the full range of ideal leadership qualities. They tend to be stronger in some areas than others. The more thoughtful, well-informed and well-justified the answer, the higher the mark.

There was also plenty of scope for original argument in part 2. Here the research is quite critical of much organisational practice which operates quite informally, line managers from time to time being asked to identify people on the basis of hunch and gut feeling. Often individuals are asked to put themselves forward. It is strongly argued in the research on the identification of future leaders that a more formal approach is taken using questionnaire-based tools, assessment centres and sophisticated approaches to performance and development review. The stronger answers contained points along these lines. There is nothing wrong with asking line managers to make suggestions, but a formal stage should then follow to establish if someone meets enough of the full range of attributes. There was some tendency here for candidates to focus more on leadership development than on selecting future leaders and some marks were lost accordingly.

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Question C6

Learning Outcome: L03 Debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations.

Really strong answers to part 1 were characterised by a good range of distinct types of measures. These covered recruitment and selection activities incorporating measures such as effectively carrying out a due diligence exercise on senior external recruits before confirming appointments. Personality testing, taking up references and extensive competency-based interviewing can also all play an important part. When it comes to internal promotion the key is to have in place policies and procedures which deter toxic behaviour (disciplinary procedures, bullying and harassment policies, statements of corporate ethics), training in the advantages associated with enlightened and people-focused leadership, effective grievance procedures and potentially forms of 360 degree appraisal. These should help ensure that the wrong people do not get promoted into positions which will give them an opportunity to abuse their power. Strong candidates also took the opportunity here to discuss some current topics in leadership research like distributive leadership and authentic leadership. Some weaker answers tended to describe toxic leadership and give examples of it rather than to address the question directly.

The business case is based on the damage a toxic leader can do to an organisation's reputation, not least its reputation as an employer. Strong performers leave and it is harder to attract replacements because people don't like working in toxic environments. There is also a case to make around employee engagement, commitment and satisfaction. Bullying is a lot less effective at securing high levels of individual performance as more constructive approaches. Poor judgement on the part of senior leaders can be hugely destructive. All these points, and more were made persuasively by the stronger candidates, often with illustrative examples by way of justification.

Question D7

Learning Outcome: L05 Critically discuss the aims and objectives of the HRM and HRD functions in organisations and how these are met in practice.

This question proved to be a very popular choice, not least I suspect because of the considerable scope it gave to advance suggested uses that were relevant to current organisational issues and concerns. There were two common weaknesses. First, some candidates overestimated what £5000 can buy in practice. Secondly, some answers tended to describe much more than they justified, and at M level persuasive justification is what really matters if high marks are to be secured.

Here it was also important that there was a clear link made to current organisational needs. A general desire to improve people's career development opportunities was not really what we were looking for when marking these answers. Nor were we asking for a training needs analysis to be used with the money. That said, any of a number of possible initiatives and interventions could and did form the basis of answers to this question. Common examples were induction activities, improving knowledge or skills, and, especially management development interventions. Candidates were free to choose one initiative to discuss in detail

or a number. What mattered as far as marking was concerned was that a credible, thoughtful and well-justified case was put to support the argument put forward.

Question D8

Learning Outcome: L05 Critically discuss the aims and objectives of the HRM and HRD functions in organisations and how these are met in practice.

HR managers always have interesting and often diverse views on the question of how best to tackle absence, particularly in organisations where it is higher than average. Candidates have also shown a willingness in the past to engage in these debates. Perhaps the requirement in part 2 to draw on research and examples put some off on this occasion, but we were not looking for any particularly specialised understanding here. The question is really about the merits of punitive approaches, so general theories about the advantages and disadvantages of using discipline in the workplace could readily be drawn on here.

The most effective answers here made a clear distinction between unauthorised absence which may or may not be for genuine reasons and serious, and incapacitating ill health which prevents someone from working when they would otherwise want to. The first part of the answer needed to contain an evaluation of the approaches used in the candidates' organisations and not a simple description. To score well they need to explain what approaches are taken and to critique these thoughtfully. Too often answers here did little more than describe the procedures in use. At M level this is never going to be enough to score high marks. The question specifically asks for critical evaluation here. The second part is focused on the broader professional debate. It was important here that candidates took a management perspective and discussed the best ways of reducing absence / keeping it low. As always the more effective the justification for the argument that was advanced, the higher the mark.

Question E9

Learning Outcome: LO7 Promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD practice in organisations.

There was plenty of scope for original points to be made here which have relevance to particular industries and organisations, as well as different types of examples. Lists of underpinning principles commonly include the following:

Employee involvement - taking into account a range of viewpoints, including those of employees, when making decisions or introducing practices which affect them.

The rule of law - removing personal bias from decision-making so that rules are applied equally to everyone.

Consistency – applying the same approach irrespective of seniority, performance or potential.

Feedback – being open, honest and accountable about decisions that have been taken

Explanations – setting out the reasons for management actions.

There was a tendency for answers to focus on disciplinary procedures, which was fine, provided they were not simply described without any kind of original discussion.

Part two could be answered from a number of perspectives. Some, for example, here wrote about beaches of trust / psychological contracts, reducing the extent to which employees have faith in their managers and hence in the organisation they work for. This can breed cynicism which has a corrosive affect beyond those who are directly affected. It can lead to unwanted staff turnover, higher absence, lower engagement / commitment and over the long term damage to corporate reputation. People want, when they have the choice, to work for employers that behave fairly and don't just claim to. It is the most effective performers who have the most choice. Some strong answers took the opportunity to demonstrate the candidates' understanding of the ways that notions of procedural justice underpin much UK employment law and that a failure to follow these principles can encourage litigation when someone feels aggrieved, and potentially to costly court actions.

Question E10

Learning Outcome: LO7 Promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD practice in organisations.

This was a very popular choice and most candidates were able to pick up marks here. The key to doing so was to spot that the question was asking for explanations as to 'why' and not simply 'how'.

There are different ways of defining the term 'professionalism', but a common definition focuses on professional knowledge. People who are members of professions are expected to be in a position to give advice and to exercise judgement which is informed by up-to-date knowledge and understanding of matters that are relevant to their roles. This enables them to practice evidence-based management and to avoid relying on gut feeling or political whims. It can thus be argued that CPD should properly form a key foundation stone for any professional body. CIPD members are representatives of their profession as well as their organisations and departments. Sloppy thinking and ignorant decision-making etc thus reflect badly on the profession as a whole if practiced by CIPD members.

There are many ways of maintaining CPD and much depends here on the level at which someone is in their career and the type of work they are doing. Most discussed steps such as reading authoritative sources, attending training events, critical self-reflection, the maintenance of CPD records, including developmental targets in performance reviews and all manner of other ways in which we learn on the job. There were numerous possibilities here. The question though asked for three distinct steps as well as justification for what is written. Three distinct steps thus had to be set out in order for the candidate to pass.

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Conclusion

Overall this appears to have been a straight forward if sometimes challenging paper for most candidates. We read some astonishingly good answers as well as many that were very solid and effective. Candidates who did not meet the pass requirements on this occasion generally either failed to answer questions in full or tended to describe when asked to evaluate and analyse. As always, the quality of the justification put forward to support arguments is a big differentiator when it comes to awarding marks. The more compelling and persuasive an argument is, the more likely candidates are to do well on an M level paper.