

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
SEC**

COMMERCE

May 2012

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Table 1 below summarises the general performance in the examination:

Table 1: Distribution of candidates' grades for the SEC Environmental Studies Exam - May 2012

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	Absent	Total
No. of Candidates										
Option A	1	2	3	1	1	-	-	1	2	11
Option B	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	3
Total %	7.2	14.2	21.5	7.2	14.2	-	-	14.2	21.5	100

GENERAL COMMENTS

As per Commerce Sec Syllabus 2012, the aim of this examination was to test the candidates' ability to:

1. understand the purpose and functions of commercial activities;
2. apply knowledge to particular commercial situations, including simple calculations;
3. recall facts, principles and show an understanding of commercial terminology;
4. analyse data and situations, make reasoned arguments and draw conclusions.

During the preparation of the papers a great deal of time was spent in order to make sure that the questions set:

1. are clear;
2. examine the candidates' understanding, knowledge, ability to analyse and apply.
3. cover the 7 major areas that are mentioned in the syllabus.

COMMENTS

PAPER I

Question 1

Other than the first part, where candidates failed to mention fiscal and monetary policy, satisfactory answers were provided.

Question 2

Parts (a) and (b) were well-answered. In part (c) where candidates had to give three other examples of companies “besides the one mentioned above”, the answers provided were not very clear and some candidates mentioned the same answer which they were asked not to mention.

In part (d) the majority of the candidates confused public companies with public corporations. Then in part (e) most of the candidates failed to define a public corporation – they just gave two examples, which in the majority of the cases, were correct.

Question 3

Parts (a) and (e) were very well-answered. Although part (b) was, in general well-answered, many candidates repeated the services of “keeping money” and “savings”. In part (c), on the other hand, most of the candidates confused a crossed cheque with a dishonoured cheque. In part (d) the debit and credit cards were erroneously defined - the former being defined as money deposited in the bank and the latter as money being withdrawn from the bank. Finally, in part (f) most of the candidates did not know what the Rate of Stock Turnover is, while in the case of the Stock Exchange no emphasis was made on the fact that this is a market for second-hand shares.

Question 4

In this question only part (a) was well-answered. In the past candidates gave quite satisfactory answers to the principles of insurance as laid out in part (b) – this year only a fourth managed to do so. The same can be said for part (c). In part (d) market research was simply defined as a means of increasing sales.

Question 5

Parts (a), (b) and (d) were well-answered. In part (c) most candidates just equated an invoice with goods sold on credit and failed to mention that details of quantities, prices and discounts are included in this document.

Question 6

This question was by far the one that caused the majority of problems even though these organisations are specifically mentioned in the syllabus. For example, the Malta Enterprise was simply described as an organisation that helps businesses. In the case of the Malta Freeport very few mentioned the facility of storage. Most of candidates realised that the Malta Maritime Authority is related to ships - but stopped there! The same happened with the Malta Chamber of Commerce, wherein very poor answers were presented.

PAPER IIA

General Comments

Overall the standard of response was very satisfactory. Candidates showed a sound knowledge of understanding of the topics examined. Most of the candidates were very well prepared and demonstrated a wide range of ability in completing the examination. In fact 66% scored 70% or higher in this paper.

Qs 5, 6 & 7 were perhaps the least attractive as very few attempted these questions.

Question 1

This question was, in general, very well-answered by the majority of candidates. On average the candidates obtained 80% of the marks in this question. The main problems encountered were in part (e) - naming and calculating two ratios to check the profitability and liquidity position of the firm.

Question 2

In this question the students weren't as successful as in Question 1. On average the candidates obtained 63% of the marks in this question. The major problems are listed below:

- Part (e) was not very well-answered.
- Candidates did not give enough of the required number of requisites.

Question 3

This question was answered by all candidates and the average mark was 74%, therefore a good attempt. Marks were lost mainly in:

- Part (a), where candidates included also the production of **goods** in defining the tertiary sector of production;
- Confused the characteristics with the functions of money.

Question 4

Once again this question was answered by all candidates. The average mark was 84%. It is also worth noting that nearly half of the candidates scored 92% or higher.

In part (d) students gave very realistic and current examples of adverts and their persuasive effects although very often the right technical terms, such as, sociable, acceptability, personality appeal, etc. were not used.

Question 5

This was an unpopular question and only a few candidates attempted question and the average mark was 72%. The main problems were:

- Some candidates left part (a) completely out;
- Gave only one correct founder country;

Question 6

This was another unpopular question and only a few candidates attempted this question and the average mark was 60%. The main reason being that candidates failed to develop the points mentioned in the answer.

Question 7

Less than half the candidates attempted this question with the average mark being 55%. The marks lost by the candidates were mainly due to the lack of understanding of the question itself for example:

- Part (a) he/she gave only one correct example of retailers in today's business world;
- In part (d) and (e) the answers were completely out-of-point.

PAPER IIB

The very few candidates who sat for this paper were not very well-prepared.

In Question 1 most candidates obtained 50% of the marks.

Question 2 provided very poor responses.

Questions 3 and 6 provided satisfactory answers by half of the candidates.

Questions 4 and 5 were not attempted by any of the candidates.

CONCLUSION

This year, the candidates sitting for this exam were, on the whole, well prepared. As in the past, however, candidates need to apply the theory they learn to the local scene.

The syllabus lays out clearly the areas which the examination will cover. So the examiners feel that candidates are expected to have some basic knowledge of those organisations mentioned in the syllabus and referred to above in the report.

It is again important to point out that the following factors would improve the candidates' performance:

1. Using a good textbook.
2. Covering the syllabus well.
3. Applying the theory to the local context e.g. knowing Maltese Commercial Banks.
4. Practicing by working out past examination papers.
5. Reading the examination questions well before attempting to answer them.
6. Time permitting, checking their examination scripts before handing them in.

**Chairperson
Board of Examiners
SEC Commerce May 2012**
