HIGHER

ADMINISTRATION & IT

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Contents

Digital resources, consisting of practice practical tasks and a practice assignment, are available to download at **www.hoddergibson.co.uk/higher-admin-tasks**

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Introduction

Higher Administration and IT has two parts: the theory element of the course, which is worth 50 marks and is assessed via a written exam to be completed within one hour and 30 minutes, and the IT element of the course, which is out of 70 marks and is assessed via an assignment which is done under assessment conditions within two hours.

Unit 1 of this book covers Administrative Theory and Practice. The theory chapters contain the information you need to pass the written exam. These chapters include the following features:

- **Key term** – an explanation of words used in the text
- **Top tip** – a key point for you to remember from that outcome
- **Study tip** – ideas for how to study and revise that outcome
- **What you need to know** – a checklist for that outcome
- **Study activities for this outcome** – give you the opportunity to practise what you have learnt
- **Case study** – a real-life case study with scaffolded questions of increasing difficulty (Building, Strengthening and Extending) to test knowledge and skills

A practice written exam-style question paper can be found at the end of this book. You can uses this to test your knowledge and understanding of the theory elements of the course.

Suggested solutions to the case studies and the practice exam paper are provided in a separate section of the book.

The practical element of the course is covered in Unit 2. These chapters contain simple step-by-step approaches that are clear for you to understand. The chapters contain the following features:

- **Command word tip** – key words that you might encounter in exam questions. They have only been included in chapters where the exam board has asked a theory question based on the practical in previous question papers.
- **Exam tip** – key points to help you study for your exam.
- **Top tip** – key points for you to remember.

Knowledge and understanding of the practical elements of the course can be tested using the digital resources available to download at **www.hoddergibson.co.uk/higher-admin-tasks** These resources include practice practical tasks, as well as a **practice exam-style assignment.**

Why study Higher Administration and IT?

Here are some quotes from former students about their experience studying the course:

'I never did Administration and IT until I was in S6. I tended to pick Graphic Communication and Art subjects. By doing Administration and IT at Higher and passing, when I left University I was able to do my own accounts as I have set up a business selling portraits. The ICT skills that I learned in Administration and IT are invaluable.'

'By studying Administration and IT I feel that it really helped me when it came to report writing and doing homework in other subjects.'

'I left school passing Higher Administration and IT. I am now a manager for a multinational insurance company – the skills I learned by doing Higher Administration and IT are having good time management skills and looking to train staff to the best of my ability so that I can retain the staff and good IT skills.'

'I am a nurse. Apart from Human Biology the one subject I am still using in my day-to-day job is the ICT skills that I picked up from Administration and IT. I have to record patients' results in a spreadsheet and at times have to sort through records using database skills that I learned in Administration and IT.'

What jobs can you get after studying Higher Administration and IT?

Below are examples of jobs where you would use Higher Administration and IT skills:

- PR manager
- Corporate finance
- Investment banking
- Event planner
- Stockbroker
- Nurse
- Wedding planner

- Police officer
- Fire officer
- Office manager
- Administrative assistant
- Marketing executive
- HR manager
- Accountant

Impacts

In the theory element of Higher Administration and IT, it is important that you know a bank of impacts to help answer the questions.

An example of an impact is that if you get trained in health and safety then there should be a reduction in accidents. The reduction in accidents is an **impact**.

Here are some examples of impacts:

- increase/decrease in positive/negative reviews
- increase/decrease in positive/negative reputation
- increase/decrease in customers
- increase/decrease in profits
- increase/decrease in sales
- increase/decrease in sales revenue
- increase/decrease in customer loyalty
- increase/decrease in waste
- increase/decrease in customer satisfaction
- increase/decrease in mistakes
- increase/decrease in accidents in the workplace
- increase/decrease in staff morale
- increase/decrease in staff turnover
- increase/decrease in customer footfall
- increase/decrease in highly skilled employees
- increase/decrease in costs/expenses
- increase/decrease in absenteeism.

Command words

The following are examples of command words that students might encounter in exam questions.

Identify

Name something – all you need is one word. One identification = 1 mark.

> **EXAMPLE**
> - Question: **Identify** three time stealers.
> - Answer: Distractions, inability to say no, unnecessary phone calls.

Outline

Give a brief statement – a short sentence. One outline = 1 mark.

> **EXAMPLE**
> - Question: **Outline** one barrier to communication.
> - Answer: Background noise such as the radio can be a barrier to communication.

Describe

Give a description and use examples where possible within the description. Try to get 'this means' into your answer. One description = 1 mark.

> **EXAMPLE**
> - Question: **Describe** strategies to improve the effectiveness of time and task management.
> - Answer: Each job can be given a priority. This means that each job can be presented in a list which highlights the most important tasks first and makes them more manageable.

Compare

You must be able to compare the similarities and differences between the items. If you are answering the question like a similarity, start with the word 'both'. If you are answering the questions like a difference, then use the word 'whereas' in the middle of your answer. One comparison = 1 mark.

> **EXAMPLE**
> - Question: **Compare** the role of an Administrative Assistant and Chairperson.
> - Possible answers:
>   - They both meet before the meeting to discuss the agenda together. (1 mark)
>   - An Administrative Assistant types up the agenda whereas the Chairperson signs off the agenda. (1 mark)

Distinguish

You must be able to give a difference between two items and use the word 'whereas'. One difference = 1 mark.

> **EXAMPLE**
> - Question: **Distinguish** between formal and informal meetings.
> - Answer: A formal meeting will have minutes recorded for all attendees, whereas an informal meeting may have no minutes.

Discuss

Give advantages and disadvantages where possible. Use examples if you can in your answer and make a conclusion if possible. One discussion point = 1 mark.

> **EXAMPLE**
> - Question: **Discuss** the impact of poor communication between an Administrative Assistant and their manager.
> - Answer: Employees may wrongly inform customers which leads to the organisation receiving a bad reputation.

Explain

Give a definition and then give an impact. If the question is asking for an advantage, give a definition and say, 'this is good because' and then give an impact. If the question asks for a disadvantage, say, 'this is bad because' and then give an impact. One explanation (must be impact) = 1 mark.

> **EXAMPLE**
> - Question: **Explain** one benefit of good time and task management.
> - Answer: Good time and task management will lead to good working relationships. This is good because morale will be high which will increase productivity.

Implications/Consequences

Implication: You should state what the likely outcome will be of a particular action, either on a person or the organisation. One outcome = 1 mark.

Consequence: You must be able to identify the initial impact of the action being followed. One consequence = 1 mark.

> **EXAMPLE**
> - Question: Describe a **consequence** and the **implication** to an organisation of inadequate planning for a meeting.
> - Answer: The venue may be double booked, meaning that the meeting may need to be postponed and attendees may be greatly inconvenienced.

Justify

You must be able to give reasons why a certain course of action is being taken (an advantage).

> **EXAMPLE**
> - Question: **Justify** the need for an employee to receive training in using the organisation's IT systems.
> - Answer: Employees will feel more confident if trained in the use of IT systems and therefore will have a higher morale at work, which will increase productivity.

Unit 1

Administrative Theory and Practice

Chapter 1 The role of an Administrative Assistant and meetings

1.1 The role of an Administrative Assistant

Figure 1.1

An Administrative Assistant provides different kinds of administrative support for the organisation. This is a vital role in keeping the organisation working effectively on a daily basis. An Administrative Assistant will be involved in the planning and organising of events, such as business meetings and conferences. As such they will be expected to multitask and undertake a broad range of duties.

The two documents used in the recruitment process are the Job description and the Person specification.

A **Job description** is a document which outlines what a vacant position will entail. It will include information such as:

- the job title
- description of the duties of the job
- the main purpose of the job
- the department the job belongs to
- who the job reports to
- the duties associated with the job (for example, providing administrative support by writing emails and answering calls from customers)

- working conditions (such as job location, starting and finishing time and training)
- salary
- holiday entitlement.

A **Person specification** is a document which outlines the requirements of the applicants for them to be considered for the job. It will include requirements such as:

- skills
- experience
- qualifications.

These categories are grouped into 'essential' characteristics, which means that the applicant must have this requirement, and 'desirable' characteristics, which means that it would be an advantage if you have this requirement.

Below is an example of a Job description and a Person specification for an Administrative Assistant.

Position	Administrative Assistant
Reports to	Senior Administrator
Salary	£15,000 per year
Holiday entitlement	25 days per year
Key responsibilities	- Maintaining and updating databases. The ideal candidate must be able to search and sort databases and produce forms and reports. - Answering the telephone and transferring calls to appropriate members of staff. - Receiving and passing on messages when the member of staff is not available. - Delivering excellent customer service to give a good impression of the organisation. - Making appointments in the electronic diary for meetings and events. - Ensuring all tasks are completed on time. - Undertaking word processing tasks, e.g. letters to customers, preparing reports for management, preparing agenda and minutes. - Sending and receiving emails to/from customers/suppliers/employees. - Using office equipment to support colleagues, e.g. photocopying booklets. - Undertaking reception duties, e.g. dealing with and directing visitors, ensuring the visitors' book is signed and badges issued.

Table 1.1 Job description of an Administrative Assistant

	Essential	Desirable
Education/employment history	- N5 English - N5 Administration and IT - N5 Mathematics - HNC Administration or other business-related subject	- One year's experience working in an office environment. - Over one year's experience working in customer service.
Skills and qualities	- Good time keeping and attendance record. - A good working knowledge of IT software to complete tasks, e.g. word processing, PowerPoint, Excel spreadsheets. - Good communication skills to create a good impression with customers. - Good file management skills to ensure that documents are stored securely and able to be found when needed. - Able to work independently or as part of a team to ensure tasks are completed effectively. - Motivated, keen to learn and willing to keep up with technological changes.	- Be able to work calmly under pressure. - Be able to touch type.

Table 1.2 Person specification of an Administrative Assistant

Duties	Skills	Qualities
- File information. - Update schedules. - Organise business travel. - Schedule meetings and events. - Operate the telephone system. - Reply to generic emails and enquiries. - Maintain office equipment. - Deal with requests for information. - Prepare documents such as letters, agendas and memos.	- Communication - Organisation - Problem solving - Interpersonal - ICT	- Tactful - Team player - Friendly - Approachable - Patient - Confident

Table 1.3 Duties, skills and qualities of an Administrative Assistant

Senior Administrative Assistant

Administrative Assistants and Senior Administrative Assistants (or Office Managers/Coordinators) provide advanced administrative support to an organisation. However, Senior Administrative Assistants generally have greater experience or are more qualified than Administrative Assistants and they are more likely to work closely with management, working on tasks which may require greater sensitivity, confidentiality or skill.

Below are examples of a Job description and a Person specification for a Senior Administrative Assistant.

Figure 1.2

Position	Senior Administrative Assistant
Reports to	Senior Management
Salary	£25,000 per year
Holiday entitlement	30 days per year
Key responsibilities	- Operating a petty cash system. - Ordering office supplies for the whole organisation. - Providing training on administrative systems to the office staff. - Conducting appraisals for the office staff. - Monitoring and controlling **PDP** for staff. - Managing electronic diaries for senior management. - Delegating tasks to office staff. - Supervising junior and apprentice Administrative Assistants. - Preparing reports for management meetings. - Liaising with the Chairperson about the agenda for upcoming meetings.

Table 1.4 Job description of a Senior Administrative Assistant

KEY TERM

PDP – Personal Development Plan.

	Essential	Desirable
Education/employment history	● Higher English ● Higher Administration & IT ● N5 Mathematics ● HND Administration/ Office Studies	● Over five years' experience working in an office environment. ● Over five years' experience working in customer service. ● Over two years' management experience. ● Higher Business Management.
Skills and qualities	● Good time keeping and attendance record. ● A good working knowledge of IT software to complete tasks. ● Good communication skills to create a good impression with the customer. ● Able to work independently or as part of a team to ensure tasks are completed effectively. ● Motivated, keen to learn and willing to keep up with technological changes. ● Delegation skills. ● Leadership skills to offer support to other members of the office.	● Be able to work calmly under pressure. ● Be able to touch type.

Table 1.5 Person specification of a Senior Administrative Assistant

Duties	Skills	Qualities
● Maintain and order office supplies. ● Manage the electronic diary/ schedule for management. ● Supervise Junior Administrative Assistants. ● Prepare reports and presentations for management. ● Train Administrative Assistants. ● Arrange the work rota of Administrative Assistants. ● Delegate work to Administrative Assistants.	● Reliable ● Adaptable ● Communication ● IT ● Problem solving ● Leadership ● Assertive ● Planning	● Optimistic ● Calm ● Flexible ● Honest ● Model good behaviour ● Empathetic

Table 1.6 Duties, skills and qualities of a Senior Administrative Assistant

TOP TIP

There are Administrative Assistants in the office and they have managers who are classed as Senior Administrative Assistants. The Senior Administrative Assistant will take on a management type role in the office as they are responsible for junior administrative staff.

Junior Administrative Assistant	Senior Administrative Assistant
- Prepares key business documents such as letters. - Deals with requests for information. - Conducts reprographic duties such as photocopying. - Operates the telephone system/switchboard. - Conducts reception duties. - Organises business travel and accommodation requests. - Undertakes filing either electronically or digitally. - Creates and updates spreadsheets and databases for use.	- Operates and controls the petty cash system and pays employee expenses. - Maintains and orders office supplies/equipment. - Manages the electronic diary/schedule of the senior management team. - Supervises the Junior Administrative Assistants. - Prepares presentations and reports for the senior management team. - Delegates and evaluates the work of the Administrative Assistants.

Table 1.7 Differences between a Junior Administrative Assistant and a Senior Administrative Assistant

1.2 Types of meetings

A meeting is a gathering together of people for a specific purpose. In today's world, we are very heavily dependent on ICT to conduct a meeting. Technology is used, such as the internet, webcams, smartphones and tablets so that people within an organisation can communicate and effectively hold a meeting in an office or remotely.

The main purposes of meetings are:

- to plan for the future
- to make and agree on decisions
- to set targets and objectives
- to motivate staff and encourage team building
- to consult on issues and solve problems
- to discuss and generate ideas
- to share good practice and concerns.

There are two types of meetings:

- **Informal**: these are often held in business. These meetings can range from chats during tea breaks to regular sales team meetings. There are no procedures or rules to follow.
- **Formal**: these are held for a specific purpose and at regular intervals: for example, the Annual General Meeting (AGM). These meetings have to follow rules and procedures.

Figure 1.3 Informal meetings have no set procedures to follow

Figure 1.4 Formal meetings have set rules and procedures

1.3 Roles and responsibilities

The main positions of responsibility for formal meetings are as follows:

- Chairperson: responsible for keeping order and taking charge at the meeting
- Secretary: provides administrative support
- Treasurer: prepares financial reports.

Before	During	After
• Compiles the agenda for the meeting. • Ensures the meeting is set up according to the **Standing Orders/ Articles of Association**. • Ensures the Secretary has notified all attendees of the meeting. • Checks that the meeting venue meets the requirements of the meeting and raises any issues with the Secretary.	• Ensures there is a **quorum**. • Starts and ends the meeting on time. • Keeps control of the meeting. • Makes sure everyone has a chance to speak. • Explains complex issues. • Decides when it is time to vote. • Declares and records the results of the vote. • Makes decisions. • Closes or adjourns the meeting.	• Liaises with the Secretary regarding the preparation of the draft minutes and agenda for the next meeting. • Takes follow-up actions resulting from the items discussed. • Makes any necessary decisions between meetings, usually in consultation with the Secretary.

Table 1.8 Duties of Chairperson before, during and after meetings

KEY TERMS

Quorum – The minimum amount of people to be in attendance at a meeting to make the meeting valid.

Standing Orders/Articles of Association – The formal written rules of how meetings should be organised and conducted within organisations.

Before	During	After
• Books the venue. • Makes sure the room is laid out appropriately. • Organises refreshments. • Books any equipment needed. • Informs reception where the meeting is taking place. • Makes a note in appropriate diaries – Chairperson. • Makes extra copies of the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting. • Makes a note of any apologies received. • Prepares name badges for attendees. • Informs reception of the meeting and where it is being held. • Checks the room is as expected. • Checks equipment is working. • Makes sure there are signs directing attendees to the meeting room. • Places a 'Meeting in progress' sign on the door. • Prepares an attendance register.	• Passes any papers to the Chairperson. • Reads the minutes of the previous meeting and reports any apologies received. • Makes sure the Chairperson signs the minutes of the previous meeting. • Makes sure everyone signs the attendance register. • Takes notes for the minutes of the meeting. • Makes a separate note for actions by the Chairperson. • Distributes expense claim forms.	• Tidies the room and collects all unused papers. • Drafts the minutes and gives a copy to the Chairperson. • Makes a note in the diary of when the agenda for the next meeting should be sent out. • Follows up any actions arising from the meeting. • Writes any letters as required from the meeting. • Makes a note of the date of the next meeting. • Prepares the agenda and Chairperson's agenda for the next meeting.

Table 1.9 Duties of a Secretary/Administrative Assistant before, during and after meetings

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About the authors

Steven Argo and **Lee Hepburn** worked together for three years at Lochgelly High School and, in that time, students achieved 100% A–C passes. Steven is now the Principal Teacher of Curriculum for Business and Information Technology at Dunfermline High School. Both Steven and Lee have industry experience, which they use to make resources that are up to date, relevant for students, and help to develop a solid understanding of Business-related courses. Both Steven and Lee are Subject Leads for Fife Council and have a real passion for supporting students and enabling them to fulfil their potential.

Trust our authors – whose students have achieved 100% A–C grades in Higher Admin since 2018 – to build your confidence and boost your grade.

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