



2003 VCE VET Community Services GA 2: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

There was a marked increase in the number of students who sat for this examination (almost triple the number of students in 2001 and 2002).

This examination was constructed to allow the Community Services (Community Work) students to demonstrate their understanding of the underpinning knowledge integrated across the units of competence. As in previous examinations, the emphasis in the range of questions reflected the nominal hours, hence the focus on community development.

There are some aspects of underpinning knowledge which are common to the units of competence; these include relevant legislation and statutory requirements, organisational policies and procedures, principles and practices (community development and social justice), and resources both within and for the community. In the main, responses revealed very limited knowledge and understanding of these aspects. Appreciation of social justice principles and of the ethical responsibilities of workers; two key facets of work in community services, was slight. Responses indicated a high awareness of confidentiality as a requirement of workers, but without much evident awareness of the purposes of the requirement.

In relation to legislation, while there was general awareness of the *Privacy Act 1988*, there was little evidence of depth of knowledge of the requirements, or breadth of knowledge of other legislation.

Questions which asked for two points were often answered with only one point. This may indicate a lack of knowledge, but may also result from students not reading the question.

Electives

Students were required to answer two of the three electives; however, a number attempted all three. Students were considerably challenged by the questions relating to advocacy and generally the answers were superficial, particularly the three key questions – why people seek an advocate, the key principles guiding advocates, and ways the advocacy process can be empowering.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A – Short answer

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	40	46	14	0.74

All three core units of competence (*Implement a community development strategy*, *Operate under a case work framework*, and *Participate in the work environment*) as well as two of the elective units (*Advocate for clients* and *Participate in policy development*) require some understanding of legislative and statutory requirements. Many students either did not attempt this question or gave answers which indicated they did not understand the question. The response ‘Anti-Discrimination Act’ was not accepted as this is not the title of a Victorian or Federal Act.

Legislation which falls into the category of relating to discrimination includes:

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwlth)
- *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* (Cwlth)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (Victoria)
- *Equal Employment Opportunity Act (Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cwlth)
- *Racial Hatred Act 1995* (Cwlth)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cwlth).

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	0	15	25	59	3.40

Where a student’s answers were awarded less than full marks, generally it was because two likely causes were not given for each problem. Acceptable answers to this question included:

i

Back injury

- lifting
- manual handling
- heavy loads
- incorrect posture – uncomfortable seats.

ii

Stress

- overwork
- client overload
- problem or difficult people (boss, co-workers, clients)
- emotional duress
- overtiredness
- high demand for limited resources
- lack of self care by worker
- poor support services available for staff
- inadequate policies or working conditions
- low wages/remuneration.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	19	9	22	23	18	6	3	2.42

In answering this question, students were expected to express their understanding of the ‘social justice principles’ which are often referred to as underpinning Community Services work. A considerable proportion of students did not attempt it. The lack of awareness of a distinction between Access and Participation was evident in many answers.

Preferred responses reflected the following:

i

Access:

- sets up processes that make services, facilities or resources available to all people
- means improving people’s quality of life through having better access to services, facilities and resources.

ii

Equity:

- redresses imbalance of resources and choices and gives people power
- makes opportunities available to all people on a fair and equal basis, which enriches their lives.

iii

Participation:

- involves people in all aspects of decision-making that affect their lives.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	15	37	33	11	2.30

The difficulty which many students had in listing more than two or three responsibilities which were appropriate, reflected a more general uncertainty about key ethical responsibilities for community services workers. The question required the identification of ethical responsibilities which in some way expressed the following:

- confidentiality
- duty of care (honesty, trustworthiness)
- putting the interests and welfare of clients first
- role boundaries
- outlining clients’ rights
- informed consent
- legal obligations
- honesty
- respect
- remaining non-judgmental.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	13	11	34	26	16	2.19

This question required that students relate the ethical responsibilities to their direct experience in community services. Where a student had difficulty in responding appropriately to Question 4, this became an even more challenging

question. Students' responses covered a relatively narrow range, focusing mainly on confidentiality/privacy and duty of care. Some students did show an awareness of mandatory reporting. More successful answers showed an awareness of the role of confidentiality in ensuring trust between worker and client.

Successful answers showed an awareness and appreciation of the following. Responses could have focused on:

- Confidentiality:

What the client tells the worker is kept confidential. This creates a safe environment for the client to discuss their problems/issues.

- Duty of care:

Responsibility of the worker to take reasonable care to ensure that no harm comes to the people in their care/using their services.

- Role boundaries:

Worker does not attempt to go outside the responsibilities and duties of their prescribed role. Workers stick to their professional role and duties and do not take on any other role with their clients.

- Outlining clients' rights:

Worker has the responsibility to ensure that clients are informed of their rights.

- Informed consent:

Clients have the right to know exactly the nature and limits of the assistance being offered by the worker.

- Legal obligations:

Workers are bound to work within the limits set out by any relevant legislation that applies to their work such as mandatory reporting, *Children and Young Person's Act 1989 (Victoria)*.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	13	7	21	27	24	8	2.66

This question was an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding of casework and of empowerment.

Answers had to be consistent with the following:

- the goal of working with people is not to satisfy their immediate need, but to develop their skills so they can satisfy their own need in the future
- casework seeks to develop independence, not continue dependence; this is the goal of empowerment.

Other concepts considered appropriate were:

- self-reliance
- autonomy
- partnership
- working with, not for
- giving skills.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	0	9	17	30	21	17	5	1	4.34

None of the statements related to document 5 (Policy on Challenging Behaviours).

Statements	Related Document number
Information which is gained about the client must remain confidential.	3
Petty Cash Claims must be approved by your manager.	8
We intend to provide a supportive environment that will enable all our staff members, paid and unpaid, to develop to their full potential.	7
Used sharps are normally contaminated with blood, and so are classified as contaminated waste. They must be treated as a potential health hazard and disposed of as follows.	2
We will use and disclose personal information only for the stated purpose for which it was collected or for a secondary purpose which the person would reasonably expect. Should we want to use the information for any other purposes, we will seek your consent.	3
Our aim in providing services is to exceed clients' expectations.	1
All other duties as required.	4
In addition to the alleged harasser, the employer, manager or supervisor may be held legally liable for the alleged harassment.	6

Section B – Scenario

The scenario section, along with the electives required students to integrate their knowledge with their experience.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	16	36	32	10	2.26

The varying quality of responses to this question indicated in part that some students had scanned but not read the scenario. Areas of concern which were considered appropriate included:

i

Impact on the community:

- the changes will make life more difficult for some people (e.g. less convenient for parents and children; isolates the elderly from the children)
- the proposal favours the sports clubs at the expense of the rest of the community
- the environment will suffer with the loss of trees.

ii

The decision-making process:

- the rights of other users of the park must be made known and considered
- without participation, there could be a paternalistic or autocratic approach to the decision rather than shared decision-making
- the time span is very short
- the wording/language of the poster excludes people who do not read or cannot read English, or people who cannot see.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	10	15	30	45	2.09

Many students were uncertain about what the ‘principles of community development’ might be. At their most concrete level the principles are expressed as the three elements of the unit of competence CHCCD14A – *Implement a community development strategy* (i.e. work with individuals to identify issues; work with individuals and groups to establish cooperative processes; support group processes). Preferred responses included:

- complain or offer suggestions to the Council (phone, letters)
- contact the local Councillor
- networking
- discuss matters with the neighbours (who are complaining about the cars parking in the street)
- organise a petition
- call a meeting
- organise a group of concerned people
- advocacy.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	17	13	26	28	16	2.11

The intent of the question was to allow students to enunciate the three focal points for consideration – job role and workload, manager and the organisation, and the possible roles in this issue. Issues for consideration include:

- not part of my job
- my time
- my resources
- would increase my workload
- I need the manager’s consent
- this has an impact on the people I work with
- I am part of the community
- there is a responsibility to support the people you work with in their concerns
- do they need **my** help?
- is there someone else who could do it better?
- how could I be usefully involved?

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	4	38	58	1.54

This question also asked students to use ‘principles of community development’ but, in contrast to Section B Question 2, this question was relatively well-answered.

- people have a right to know what is going on and why
- participation
- collective action
- possible consensus
- consultation
- without this, people could feel powerless
- provides feedback to council
- explores all points of view.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	6	19	35	36	2.93

Responses to this question revealed limited awareness of practical ways to keep people informed in an office and on a committee. Few were able to go beyond email, newsletters, reports and phone calls. In comparing the responses to this question and to Section B Question 10, it is clear that differentiation between workplace communication practices and general community information techniques is not evident for many students. The range of appropriate responses included:

- written reports
- newsletters
- emails
- verbal reports at meetings
- timesheet (especially for out-of-hours work)
- work plan
- discussion
- whiteboard (saying where you are, what you are doing and have done)
- diary
- contact number for when you are out of the office
- mobile phone.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	36	38	20	6	0.95

A limited response to the previous question made this a difficult question. Appropriate responses encompassed aspects of the following:

- ensures Occupational Health and Safety/Work Cover requirements are met
- enables feedback and support
- ensures trust
- prevents isolation
- ensures industrial rights (correct pay, time in lieu).

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	41	25	34	0.93

Providing a response to this question also challenged a considerable number of students. Practical support included:

- letter-writing
- phone calls
- gathering information
- sending and receiving emails and faxes
- making contacts (networking)
- help in finding other resources
- access to a meeting space.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	32	41	27	0.94

The range of answers given by students for this question was very limited. Anticipated responses were that an organised group would show that:

- the views being expressed represent more than one or two people
- a number of people are interested in the decision of the Council
- the voters are keeping a close watch on what is happening

- the matter is of real concern.
- Or that a group:
- has more power
 - is more credible and people are more ready to take notice
 - has a wider base of skills; even people who can talk to the media.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	25	32	28	15	1.33

In answering this question, more than just ‘a survey’ was expected, since a survey as such is a strategy. The specification of the target/s of the survey, and/or the identified results of a survey met the requirements. The following are examples of appropriate answers:

- how many people per day/per week use the park
- the times the park is most used
- the reasons people use the park
- what people say about the park in its present state
- the concerns of the people who use the park
- community profile
- results of a survey of casual users of the park who are not in an organised activity
- information about the organised groups who use the park
- photos of people using the park
- implications/impact of proposed changes for the community.

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	2	13	83	2.75

Students answered this question very well although the range of responses was limited, favouring newsletters and notices. The nomination of TV and radio indicated non-metropolitan experience, since those media in regional and rural areas are much more community-oriented and accessible than in the metropolitan area. Anticipated channels of information were:

- newsletter
- items in the local paper
- telephone tree (people ringing people)
- notices and noticeboards in public places
- going along to the meetings of the different groups
- Internet, email
- TV/radio information
- meetings.

Question 11

a–b

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	17	16	41	26	1.76

Students had great difficulty in distinguishing between privacy and confidentiality. While the requirements under both headings are interchangeable to some extent, the legislation relates to privacy; confidentiality is an ethical responsibility (refer to Section A Question 4 of the examination paper).

a

- *Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic); Privacy Act 1988–2000 (Cwlth)* (Privacy or Privacy Act were sufficient to obtain the mark).

b

Restrictions:

- people must know what information about them you are going to keep
- people must know what use you are going to make of the information about them
- no one else has access to this information
- includes the requirement that the information is being stored safely.

Question 12

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	4	16	80	1.76

Responses indicated great familiarity with the sector’s modes of fundraising. However, the response of some that membership fees could be increased indicated the lack of a close reading of the question. Acceptable options included:

- sponsorship
- fundraising such as doorknocks, an appeal, raffles
- look for grants (from Council or Government)
- your organisation might have some money.

Question 13

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	7	20	35	35	2.90

An unexpected number of responses suggested as a disadvantage the possibility of receiving negative emails from people. Community development practice, however, might see this as a positive in contributing to moving ahead with discussion and the formulation of proposals.

Advantages

- wide range of people can access the information
- easier than putting up posters or delivering leaflets or writing letters
- people can access the information in their own time.

Disadvantages

- still have to let people know it is available on the Internet
- not everyone has a computer with access to the Internet
- will take time and money to set it up and keep updating it
- may exclude people of other cultures
- not everyone can access or use a computer.

Section C

Elective 1 – Advocate for clients

Students were expected to use the context at the beginning of the elective of their responses. From the nature of the responses, it is not evident that students used this context. This elective was attempted by nearly all students.

Question 1

a

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	8	36	56	1.48

Desired responses included:

- cannot represent themselves (including language barriers)
- lack of confidence
- lack of information
- lack of skills
- powerful opposition
- to get help.

b

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	24	31	32	13	1.32

The principles included:

- confidentiality
- non-judgmental
- non-discriminatory
- not speaking for people who can speak for themselves
- the social justice principle that people have the right to be heard
- upholding the rights of people
- empowerment
- only represent/put across the views of the client
- keep out of it personally.

c

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	18	9	22	29	22	2.28

Some students sought to use steps of conflict resolution in their answer to this question. While there are some parallels, this revealed uncertainty about the translation of the principles into a process.

Steps included:

- understand what the person/people want
- clarify their goals

- identify the skills they need
- identify resources
- review the needs of the person/people
- help them develop skills
- find information required
- present the case
- give feedback to the person/group.

d

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	20	32	35	13	1.40

As in Question 3 of Section A, ‘unpacking’ the meaning of empowerment proved difficult for many students. The following are some of the facets:

- people gain skills, knowledge, confidence, decision-making capacity
- people come to understand processes, resources, how to attain what they really want
- promotes equity, contributes to social cohesion.

e

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	9	24	41	26	1.85

Cross-cultural issues were seldom identified as an issue. Practising and giving people ideas were favourite responses. Ways of preparing people include:

- role-playing
- practise speaking/debating
- help them understand meeting procedure
- clarify ideas and arguments
- identify tactics/strategies for the team
- support them with interpreters.

Elective 2 – Support group activities

Question 2

a

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	32	15	26	13	14	1.60

As in Elective 1, few students answered these questions within the context of the brief scenario at the start of this elective. Almost one-third of students who chose this elective were unable to answer the first question. Points of difference between informal and formal groups include:

- membership
- office bearers
- rules and procedures
- a constitution
- regular meetings
- minutes
- regular information.

b

Marks	0	1	Average
%	26	74	0.74

Advantages included:

- strong leadership
- decisions are made
- definite spokesperson
- overrides conflict
- clear public position.

c

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	17	7	24	21	20	7	4	2.59

Factors which make an authoritarian leader inappropriate include:

- ownership of the group needs to be vested in the whole group
- democracy is the appropriate style of leadership for a community group
- proposal would be disempowering
- works against participation
- could exclude other members of the group

- one-sided
- an authoritarian style is likely to cause conflict.

d

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	18	10	32	19	21	2.14

In relation to dissatisfaction within groups, the following were possibilities:

Causes

- unequal access to information flow
- inadequate information flow
- lack of clarity about purpose
- rules not clear
- rules or procedures not being followed
- power being exercised by one or more people
- dominating people
- unresolved conflict
- unclear or unfair processes of decision-making
- inefficient office bearers.

Effects

- frustration, annoyance with the leadership and other people
- people withdrawing from the group
- loss of support
- loss of focus on the issue.

Elective 3 – Participate in policy development

This elective was attempted by the least number of students and was the least successfully answered.

Question 3

a

Marks	0	1	Average
%	22	78	0.78

This question was well answered by those who attempted this elective:

- the organisation's statement of intent
- aim
- what we commit to do
- guidelines
- rules/regulations.

b

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	26	41	18	9	1.99

The allocation of 4 marks for this question indicated that an extensive answer was expected. Few students provided sufficient detail in their response. The appropriate starting point for the responses included:

- consistency
- guidelines for action
- framework for operation
- ensures legal compliance
- empowering
- set standards.

c

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	33	41	26	0.93

A slightly elaborated answer was expected to this question, reflecting the following:

- everybody in the organisation has some role in the development of policy which has impact on them
- I can contribute to its development from my learning experience
- I have to implement it, so I should be able to comment on it.

d

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	67	27	6	0.39

In this elective, as with the other two electives, the scenario which prefaced the questions was a continuation of the major scenario which unfolded in Section B. With that information as context, the possible responses to this question should have been clear.

Arising from the experience:

- identification of issues
- the benefits of the involvement for the organisation and for clients
- provide data
- able to comment on implementation issues.

e

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	32	23	22	16	7	1.43

The number of marks gained could be directly related to the degree to which the wording of the question had been read and understood. Answers were expected to reflect aspects of the following:

- are they open rather than closed questions?
- do the questions use examples to help people understand and to give clear responses?
- will it be in the community languages?
- what allowance is being made for people who cannot read and/or write?

f

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	18	47	35	1.16

A number of students required either the locking away of forms or their shredding. Such earnest action to preserve privacy (or confidentiality) indicated a more cursory reading of the question. The desired responses included:

- aggregate data
- do not give names
- no detail revealed to enable identification.

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