



Moderators Assignment Feedback – Advanced Collections

After each series, we ask our moderators to provide a report on each assignment-based unit to identify:

- any questions which were usually answered particularly well, including main points and qualities that characterised good answers.
- any questions which were usually answered badly and main weaknesses in candidates' answers.
- common errors or misconceptions made by candidates.

We hope that this will be of assistance when completing your Advanced Collections assignment.

General feedback to candidates

As a starting point, candidates should refer to the CICM Assignment Learner Guidance for general advice on completing assignments. Secondly, reading the requirements of the questions and mark schemes carefully seems obvious, but is not always followed. These two actions will assist in keeping to the word count and showing how to correctly reference.

Better answers included real-life examples of practice of either the candidate or their organisation, however, care should be taken to protect the confidentiality of customers.

Feedback for each assignment question

This assignment aims to demonstrate that you understand the principles and practice of effective advanced collections.

Q1. For its portfolio of accounts with reference to relevant legal, regulatory, and organisational requirements:

a) Explain your organisation's collections strategy.

The best answers linked the strategy of the organisation to legal and regulatory requirements. Including an explanation of the organisation's approach to risk is also applicable to this question.

b) Explain how your organisation groups and prioritises collections work at different stages of the collections cycle.

Answers should include examples of **both** grouping *and* prioritisation of collections, including any differences at different collection stages. Grouping may include how the accounts to be grouped are identified and managed. Explanation of how collection of accounts is prioritised using organisational policy as a guide.

- c) **Explain how your organisation monitors its collections performance**
Like other parts of question 1 the answer here should focus on practice at the candidate's own organisation. Answers simply quoting a theoretical scenario achieved lower marks. Monitoring of qualitative as well as quantitative measures should be included where possible. Answers that focused simply on collection targets did not achieve higher grade passes.

Q2. For your area of work and with reference to relevant legal, regulatory, or organisational requirements:

- a) **Explain the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods of contact in the collection of debt.**

Answers including a *wide* range of contact methods achieved the higher marks, remembering to refer, where relevant, to legal, regulatory, or organisational requirements.

- b) **Explain a range of communication and negotiation skills showing their effectiveness in the collection of debt.**

Communication skills and conversational techniques should be included in the higher-grade answers. Explanation of the use of theoretical negotiation techniques in a practical setting also added to a higher grade.

- c) **Explain how you use the range of collection tools available at work to maximise cash collections without damaging customer goodwill.**

Previously, there was some misunderstanding of the definition of collection tools which led to incorrect answers.

A guide to a range of tools is included in the indicative content section in the Level 3 Diploma in Credit & Collections syllabus. This acts as a useful starting point providing the tools chosen to relate to the candidate's own area of work.

This is an example where some candidates did not answer the full question. As well as explaining a range of tools the concept of keeping customer goodwill should be included.

Q3. Explain, illustrating your response with a variety of appropriate internal and external stakeholders appropriate to your organisation.

- a) **The challenges of managing stakeholder relationships during collections activity.**

Candidates who included a wide range of internal and external stakeholders did well in this question. Those that used only an internal or external example did not achieve a high mark.

- b) **How to achieve positive outcomes for internal and external stakeholders during collections activity:**

Better answers used explanations of internal and external customer relationship management. Examples from the candidate's own organisation added value.

Q4. Appropriately evidencing your responses to this question in an Appendix, use examples from your own working practices and refer to appropriate legal, regulatory and industry requirements to explain how you have handled collections activities successfully in the following situations:

- a) Collections with elements of complexity, (for example, involving significant corporate (key account) business; customers in complex financial difficulties; customers in vulnerable circumstances.**

All parts of question 4 should be evidenced with an appendix item. Missing evidence resulted in a refer grade. In this part a) a clear example of a complex collection situation should be included. Examples of the types of situations are in question as well as additional possibilities in the Level 3 syllabus.

- b) Collections involving disputes and complaints.**

Examples from the candidate's own experience gained higher marks here. Where this area is not part of the candidate's role consideration may be given to an explanation and evidence of organisational policy.

- c) Collections involving challenging behaviours:**

Answers that simply repeated content from 4 b) did not meet pass standard. This question looks to go further evidencing customer, internal or external, behaviors. Better examples include explanations of organisational practice in situations of threats or actual abuse and customers evading payment.

Q5. Reflecting on the collections work you have carried out over a period of at least three months:

- a) Evaluate your collections performance over the course of this period, assessing how your approaches and outcomes have changed over that time, and identifying aspects of your performance which can be improved.**

A key aspect of both parts of question 5 is to centre the answer on the candidate **themselves**. Those that chose to explain departmental or organisational performance did not fare as well. Higher achieving answers also indicated the identification of improvement opportunities, in addition to the initial reflection.

- b) Develop a SMART action plan to improve your personal collections skills performance.**

To achieve a higher mark, candidates first need to understand how to make an action plan SMART. There are a wide range of explanations and examples to be found with a simple online search.

Candidates that included just one improvement, allowed themselves an opportunity to provide more detailed information. Excellent answers should bring forward an improvement identified in 5 a).