

RETAIL OPERATIONS

NORMAL (TECHNICAL) EXAMINATION SYLLABUS

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This syllabus is for Joint MOE-ITE Applied Subject Certification and is not to be used for Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education

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I INTRODUCTION

The retail industry is one of the key service industries of Singapore's economy, providing employment to a large segment of the population. There is an increasing drive towards raising the professionalism and productivity of service providers to support the long-term growth of the service industries. Hence, clarity in knowledge and skills progression for career growth and advancement in the retail industry would be necessary.

The syllabus aims to equip students with the basic knowledge, skills and values relevant for employment in small, medium to large retail establishments. It covers the functional skills and knowledge in retail operations such as selling products and services, providing customer service, handling and displaying merchandise, managing stock inventory, performing cashier duties and after-sales service. The roles and responsibilities of a retail sales associate in a retail establishment are emphasised.

Students will have opportunities to practise retailing skills in simulated retail settings where a service-oriented mindset, effective communication skills and teamwork - qualities valued by today's employers -- would be developed. There will be strong emphasis on hands-on learning and practical skills training, and developing professionalism as a retail service provider. Students will also observe and learn from real-world retail practices.

The syllabus provides upper secondary students with the basic foundation for employment in the retail industry and/or a related course of study at post-secondary institutions.

II AIMS OF SYLLABUS

The syllabus aims to:

1. Introduce students to the retail business environment;
2. Develop in students the basic functional skills and knowledge in a variety of retail store scenarios;
3. Develop in students the ability to perform service-related skills in providing basic customer service, problem-solving and communicating effectively;
4. Develop in students good working attitudes and safe working habits; and
5. Develop in students an interest in a post-secondary education in retailing and/or a possible career in the services industry.

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III SYLLABUS FRAMEWORK

The syllabus provides students with a broad understanding of the key activities in a retail business environment. It also creates awareness of the high expectations for providing excellent customer service.

The syllabus framework diagram (Figure 1) shows the organisation of content and skills into three separate, yet integrated learning domains: handling retail operations, selling products and services, and interacting with customers. Students will learn to apply knowledge and skills in a simulated retail workplace setting.

a) Handling Retail Operations

Students will learn how to handle a range of core retail operation skills such as performing point-of-sales operations, handling sales activities, performing stock control operations, displaying merchandise, and demonstrating good housekeeping practices.

b) Selling Products and Services

Students will learn the selling process and techniques of handling customer objections; and the need to recognise customers' buying behaviour in order to satisfy customer requirements. They will learn the importance of having good product knowledge and maintaining a professional image as they perform these functions.

c) Interacting with Customers

Students will learn strategies for communicating effectively with customers, dealing with different customers and handling returns and exchanges.

In achieving professionalism, the key competency to develop in students would be their ability to demonstrate effective integration of the wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired across the three learning domains. Students would develop this competency through learning experientially in simulated retail workplace settings that provide for application of such skills, knowledge and attitudes concurrently.

Figure 1



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IV ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

The assessment objectives are classified into:

1. Knowledge and Understanding

Candidates should be able to:

- 1.1 Explain the different types of retail stores;
- 1.2 Explain the major concepts, techniques and skills used in retail stores setting;
- 1.3 Explain the processes involved in handling core retail operations;
- 1.4 Explain the steps and considerations involved in the selling process; and
- 1.5 Understand the importance and implications of providing good customer service and service recovery.

2. Application

Candidates should be able to:

- 2.1 Apply knowledge of core retail operation skills and processes to make informed decisions and solve problems in a retail setting;
- 2.2 Apply steps in making a sales presentation and selling techniques to successfully close a sale;
- 2.3 Apply principles of effective communication and customer service skills in providing customer service, handling customer objections and service recovery; and
- 2.4 Apply effective communication and presentation skills, including the use of IT, in portraying facts and ideas.

3. Analysis and Planning

Candidates should be able to:

- 3.1 Demonstrate analytical skills in deepening product knowledge and retail operations.

4. Performance Skills

Candidates should be able to:

- 4.1 Perform housekeeping duties in a retail setting;
- 4.2 Handle routine retail operations;
- 4.3 Display and sell merchandise; and
- 4.4 Maintain good sales image and pitch a sale for a product.

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V SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

Number of Examination Papers

1. Candidates will be required to attempt all three compulsory papers:
 - Written Examination Paper 1
 - Practical Examination
 - Paper 2: Handling Retail Operations
 - Paper 3: Selling and Interacting with Customers

Assessment Weighting

2. The assessment weighting for each paper is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Assessment Modes and Weightings

Paper	Mode	Duration	Marks	Weighting
1	Written Examination	1 hr	30	30%
2	Practical Examination – Handling Retail Operations	30 mins	110	30%
3	Practical Examination – Demonstrate Selling Skills	15 mins	120	40%

Assessment Timeline

3. The timeline showing the recommended schedule for the conduct of the assessment is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Assessment Timeline

Paper	Date
Paper 2 Practical Examination - Handling Retail Operations	Sept of Year 1
Paper 3 Practical Examination - Demonstrate Selling Skills	Sept of Year 2
Paper 1 Written Examination	Oct of Year 2

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Written Examination

4. The assessment grid for Paper 1 is shown in Table 3. The assessment objectives are weighted to give an indication of their relative importance. They are not intended to provide a precise statement of the marks allocated to each assessment objective.

Paper 1	Assessment Objectives			Marks
	Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	
	30% - 40%	30% - 40%	20% - 30%	30

Practical Examination Tasks

5. Candidates will be tested on their ability to perform a series of tasks by applying the appropriate skills and knowledge.

Paper	Tasks
2	• Receive merchandise
	• Tag merchandise
	• Store merchandise
	• Replenish and display merchandise
	• Demonstrate safe working habits
3	• Maintain professional image
	• Perform selling process
	• Wrap and pack merchandise
	• Perform Point of Sale (POS) transaction
	• Handle returns & exchanges

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Practical Examination Details

6. Details on how candidates will be tested in each practical paper are shown below:

Practical Paper 2 Handling Retail Operations	Duration: 30 minutes
<p>Candidates will play the role of a Retail Sales Associate.</p> <p>Candidates will be presented with a simulated problem-situation on the retail floor, and be assessed on their ability to perform the following retail operations within a stipulated time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receive merchandise• Tag merchandise• Store merchandise• Replenish and display merchandise• Demonstrate safe working habits <p>A list of fixtures, equipment and materials will be provided for use by the candidates during the examination.</p> <p>Candidates will carry out the practical examination in the presence of a Marker.</p>	

Practical Paper 3 Demonstrate Selling Skills	Duration: 15 minutes
<p>Candidates will play the role of a Retail Sales Associate.</p> <p>Candidates will be presented with a scenario to demonstrate their ability to perform the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain a professional image• Perform selling process• Wrap and pack merchandise• Perform Point of Sale (POS) transaction• Handle returns and exchanges <p>A list of fixtures, equipment and materials will be provided for use by the candidates during the examination.</p> <p>Candidates will carry out the practical examination in the presence of a Marker who also plays the role of the customer. The Marker will use a list of standard comments/questions for interaction with the candidates.</p>	
<p>Note <i>Prior to Practical Paper 3, every candidate will be given 6 hours during curriculum time to conduct research on a product he/ she has been assigned to sell as a Retail Sales Associate under examination conditions. Every candidate will receive a copy of his/ her product research for reference during the examination, before entering the examination room.</i></p>	

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VI USE OF CALCULATORS

An approved calculator may be used in all the written and practical examinations.

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VII SYLLABUS CONTENT

1. HANDLING RETAIL OPERATIONS

This section introduces the different types of retail stores and the range of core retail operations. Students will learn how to perform point-of-sale operations, handle sales activities, perform stock control operations, handle merchandise display, and apply good housekeeping practices.

The section is organised into 6 units:

- Types of Retail Stores
- Performing housekeeping
- Receiving and storing merchandise
- Tagging merchandise
- Replenishing merchandise
- Perform cashier duties

1.1 Types of Retail Stores

Students should be able to:

1.1.1 Describe the retailing process

1.1.2 Describe the characteristics of the different types of retail stores:

- Specialty stores
- Convenience stores
- Department stores
- Supermarkets
- Hypermarkets

1.1.3 Demonstrate grouping of merchandise

1.2 Performing Housekeeping

Students should be able to:

Maintain the cleanliness of the store

1.2.1 Explain the importance of good housekeeping

1.2.2 Perform housekeeping activities:

- Dusting
- Vacuuming
- Cleaning displays
- Tidying work areas
- Removing litter
- Clearing bins

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1.3 Receiving and Storing Merchandise

Students should be able to:

Receive Merchandise

- 1.3.1 Describe the different channels of distribution:
- Direct selling
 - Producer to wholesaler
 - Producer to retailer
- 1.3.2 Explain the purpose of and the information found in the following documents:
- Purchase order
 - Delivery note/order
 - Invoice
- 1.3.3 Check merchandise received from suppliers:
- Type and quantity received tally with documentation
 - Methods used for filing documents (alphabetical, numerical, chronological, subject, geographical)
 - Quality
 - Condition of merchandise received (e.g. spillages, breakages)
 - Expiry date
- 1.3.4 Reject unacceptable merchandise due to:
- Wrong items
 - Poor quality
 - Damaged items
- 1.3.5 Return and record damaged or incorrect merchandise to suppliers

Store Merchandise

- 1.3.6 Explain the importance of proper handling, packaging and storing of merchandise
- 1.3.7 Explain the guidelines to observe for handling merchandise:
- Manufacturer's instructions
 - Hygiene and safety rules
 - Use of mechanical aids when lifting (trolleys, carts)
 - Avoiding undue pressure
- 1.3.8 Follow the guidelines for packing merchandise:
- Re-pack for storage
 - Use proper packing materials
 - Provide protection and support to prevent damage

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1.3.9 Follow the guidelines for storing merchandise:

- Place in designated locations
- Adopt first-in first-out method (FIFO)
- Turn labels to face forward
- Use appropriate storage receptacles (e.g. bins, boxes)
- Ensure appropriate room conditions (e.g. temperature, humidity)
- Observe hygiene, safety and security

1.4 Tagging Merchandise

Students should be able to:

Mark prices of merchandise

1.4.1 Explain the purpose of marking prices on merchandise

1.4.2 Explain the guidelines for price-tagging

1.4.3 List the general information commonly displayed on a price tag:

- Price
- Weight, dimensions
- Supplier's code

1.4.4 Identify the different types of common price tags:

- Stock Keeping Unit (SKU)
- String ticket
- Price label
- Ring seal ticket

1.4.5 Describe the factors to consider when selecting an appropriate tag for marking merchandise:

- Type of merchandise
- Visibility of tag
- Security of tag on merchandise

1.4.6 Perform price tagging on merchandise:

- Analyse features of merchandise
- Select an appropriate tag
- Write/print information on tag
- Attach tag to merchandise

1.5 Replenishing Merchandise

Students should be able to:

Perform Inventory Control

1.5.1 Explain the importance of inventory control

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- 1.5.2 Differentiate the following terms relating to inventory control:
 - Stock check
 - Stock take
- 1.5.3 Explain the purposes of stock check and stock take
- 1.5.4 Explain the uses of information and details shown on a stock record card
- 1.5.5 Perform stock check:
 - Check for accuracy of stock records
 - Determine the type and quantity of merchandise to replenish or reorder
- 1.5.6 Update a stock record card

Handle Stock Replenishment

- 1.5.7 Explain the importance of prompt replenishment of stock on shelves
- 1.5.8 Check shelves to determine:
 - Type of merchandise to replenish
 - Quantity to replenish
- 1.5.9 Remove expired and damaged stock from shelves

1.6 Performing Cashier Duties¹

Students should be able to:

Wrap and Pack Merchandise

- 1.6.1 Explain the purpose of wrapping and packing merchandise
- 1.6.2 Identify the types of materials used for wrapping and packing different types of merchandise:
 - Wrappers
 - Carrier bags
 - Bubble wrap
 - Styrofoam
 - Boxes
- 1.6.3 Select appropriate wrapping/packing materials for merchandise based on:
 - Nature of merchandise (e.g. perishable, fragile, bulky)
 - Quantity
 - Weight
 - Ease of carrying
- 1.6.4 Apply the techniques for wrapping and packing the merchandise:
 - Sorting
 - Folding

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- Bagging

1.6.5 Wrap and pack merchandise:

- Check merchandise before packing and payment
- Clarify with customer on correct merchandise
- Select wrapping/packing materials
- Wrap and pack merchandise while scanning the prices

1.6.6 Gift wrap purchased products for customers e.g. during festive season

- Sizes
- Shapes (Rectangular, square, cylindrical)
- Pattern Folding

Prepare Check-out Counter

1.6.7 Identify the components and functions of an Electronic Point-of-Sale (POS) System:

- Monitor
- Pole monitor
- Scanner
- Cash drawer
- Credit/debit card processing machine

1.6.8 Set up the POS terminal:

- Collect cash float
- Count cash and sign verification slip
- Set equipment in operational mode
- Report malfunction, if any

Perform POS transactions (cash and non-cash payments)

1.6.9 Convert common foreign currency into local currency and vice versa

1.6.10 Outline the procedure for handling cash payments using:

- Local currency
- Foreign currency

1.6.11 Outline the procedure for handling non-cash payments using:

- Vouchers, gift cards
- Discounts
- Credit card
- Debit card
- NETS
- Loyalty card

1.6.12 Handle payments received following standard procedure for cash and non-cash payments

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Perform end-of-day closing

1.6.13 Outline the procedure for end-of-day closing:

- Close POS
- Print day sales report
- Count cash
- Reconcile terminal reading with sum of cash and non-cash transactions
- Submit cash and other relevant documents to supervisor

1.6.14 Perform end-of-day closing

2. SELLING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

This section focuses on selling products and services to customers. Students are taught how to project a professional image to customers and to identify customers' needs in order to satisfy customer purchase requirements. They will also learn to handle customer objections and maximise sales opportunities.

2.1 Maintain a Professional Image

Students should be able to

2.1.1 Explain the importance of projecting a professional image to customers

2.1.2 Demonstrate how to project a professional image to customers through:

- Grooming
- Eye contact
- Posture
- Etiquette

2.1.3 Describe the characteristics of a successful sales professional:

- Self confidence
- Motivated
- Positive selling attitude
- Service-oriented mindset

2.1.4 Explain the importance of teamwork and collaboration at the workplace:

- Creates synergy
- Maximises the strength of each team player
- Promotes sense of achievement and camaraderie
- Contributes to the success of the business

2.1.5 Demonstrate safe working habits:

- Keep work area neat and clean
- Store tools and equipment safely
- Wash hands after handling unclean/raw merchandise
- Know the location of emergency exits

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2.2 Identify Customer Needs

Students should be able to:

- 2.2.1 Explain the factors that could affect customers' buying behaviour:
 - Cultural
 - Social
 - Psychological (e.g. past experience, brand consciousness)
 - Budget
- 2.2.2 Demonstrate ways to identify the specific needs of customers (listen to customers, ask questions, observation)
- 2.2.3 Apply open and closed questioning techniques to identify customer needs

2.3 Selling Products and Services

Students should be able to

- 2.3.1 Explain the importance of having an in-depth knowledge of products and services offered
- 2.3.2 Show in-depth knowledge of a retail product of choice and its target customers, and describe the key elements to highlight when promoting the product in terms of its:
 - Product features
 - Benefits to end-user
- 2.3.3 Explain the importance of sales presentation/product demonstration
- 2.3.4 Differentiate between using cross- and up-selling techniques for generating additional sales
- 2.3.5 Explain the guidelines for making a sales presentation/product demonstration:
 - Structure the presentation
 - Focus on benefits
 - Keep it short
 - Make it relevant to your customer
 - Engage customer (e.g. encourage trial, answer queries)
 - Recommend alternatives where appropriate
 - Recognise customer buying signals (e.g. verbal and non-verbal)
 - Maximise sales opportunities by cross or up-selling
- 2.3.6 Perform selling process:
 - Demonstrate knowledge of project
 - Recognise customer's buying signals
 - Maximise sales opportunities

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2.4 Pitching Sales

Students should be able to

- 2.4.1 Identify the main considerations when pitching sales
 - Price
 - Indecisiveness
 - Scepticism

- 2.4.2 Demonstrate the steps in pitching sales
 - Highlight benefits of product
 - Seek out customer's concerns, if any
 - Highlight other benefits of the product or recommend similar products

3. INTERACTING WITH CUSTOMERS

This section focuses on effective communication with customers. Students will learn the importance of customer service, techniques for effective communication, and strategies for dealing with different customers and to perform service recovery.

3.1 Communicate Effectively with Customers

Students should be able to

- 3.1.1 Explain the techniques for effective communication in providing customer service:
 - Prepare to listen
 - Be open-minded
 - Establish eye contact

- 3.1.2 Apply common non-verbal communication techniques through:
 - Body language
 - Personal space
 - Physical contact
 - Facial expressions

3.2 Provide Customer Service

Students should be able to

- 3.2.1 Explain the importance of good customer service.

- 3.2.2 Explain the consequences of poor service:
 - Loss of business
 - Loss of customer goodwill
 - Cost of attracting and replacing customers

- 3.2.3 Explain the concepts in providing quality customer service:
 - Customer touch-points
 - Go the Extra Mile for Service (GEMS)

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3.3 Perform Service Recovery

Students should be able to

- 3.3.1 Explain the causes of service breakdown:
- Broken promise (e.g. delay in service)
 - Lack of training for service provider (e.g. over-charging, wrong items packed)
 - Poor service attitude (e.g. rudeness)
 - Faulty product
- 3.3.2 Identify the common types of difficult customers:
- Angry customer
 - Rude customer
 - Demanding customer
 - High Roller customer
 - Rip-off customer
- 3.3.3 Explain the guidelines for handling difficult customers:
- Be tactful
 - Stay calm
 - Do not blame the customer
 - Do not take criticisms personally
- 3.3.4 Outline the procedure for handling returns and exchanges:
- Obtain proof of purchase from customer
 - Check condition of merchandise
 - Verify with customer the reasons for exchange/return
 - Take appropriate action in accordance with company policy (e.g. exchange, refund, price adjustment)
 - Fill in forms for record purposes
- 3.3.5 Demonstrate the process of handling returns and exchanges
- Apologise
 - Listen for facts
 - Show empathy
 - Suggest solution (e.g. exchange merchandise)

VII REMARKS

This syllabus has significant overlap with N(T) Elements of Business Studies syllabus and thus cannot be offered together with N(T) Elements of Business Studies.