RETAIL OPERATIONS

NORMAL (TECHNICAL) EXAMINATION SYLLABUS

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, keeping abreast with the knowledge and skills needed for progression for career growth and advancement in the retail industry would be necessary.

The syllabus aims to equip students with an insight into the changing retail landscape and functional skills and knowledge in the retail operations for both store and online retailing. These functional skills and knowledge include understanding the retail landscape, managing stock, replenishing stocks, selling products and services, providing customer service, and after-sales service.

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

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 required for a variety of retail scenarios in a store and online settings;

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 Retail Operations (RO) syllabus provides students with a broad understanding of the key activities in a retail business environment. The syllabus framework diagram (Figure 1) shows the organisation of content into three separate, yet integrated learning domains: Introduction to Retailing, Handling Retail Processes, and Customer Service, Selling Products and Services. Through the learning domains, students will be equipped with an understanding of the changing retail landscape, acquire basic retail operations skills and knowledge, and perform service-related skills in a simulated retail workplace setting.

a) Introduction to Retailing

Students will learn about the concepts of retailing, and how the changing retail landscape provides career opportunities for students to explore.

b) Handling Retail Processes

Students will learn about the range of core retailing concepts that are used by both store and online retailing such as the receiving and storing of merchandise. They will also learn unique retailing concepts pertaining to physical stores and online retailing.

c) Customer Service, Selling Products and Services

Students will learn about the importance of customer service, and the process of selling products and services to customers. They will learn about different strategies to communicate effectively with customers. Students will also learn the selling process and how they can sell products differently in a face-to-face and in a digital sales pitch.

In a simulated retail environment, students will apply the retailing skills and knowledge of the three learning domains in various retail scenarios.
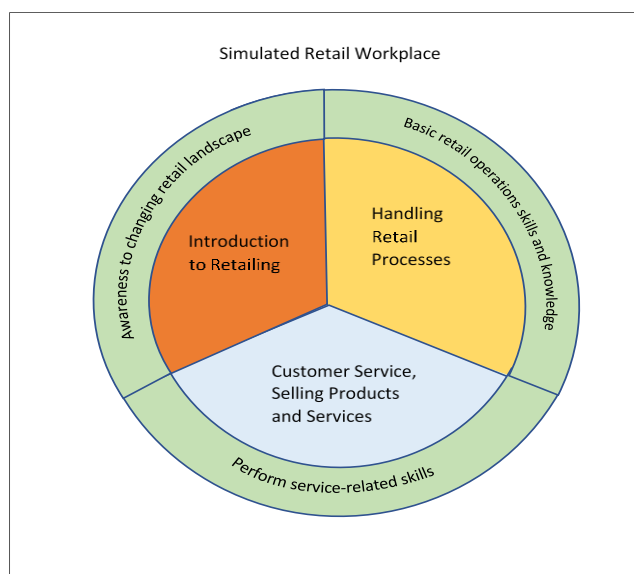

Figure 1: RO Syllabus Framework

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IV   ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

The assessment objectives are classified into:

1.   Knowledge and Comprehension

       Candidates should be able to:

       1.1   Identify the different types of physical and online retail stores.
       1.2   Describe the processes involved in handling core retail operations for both physical and online stores.
       1.3   Explain the importance of providing good customer service.

2.   Application

       Candidates should be able to:

       2.1   Apply knowledge of core retail operation skills and processes to perform retailing tasks effectively.
       2.2   Apply steps in making a sales presentation and selling techniques to successfully make a digital sales pitch.
       2.3   Apply principles of effective communication and customer service skills in providing customer service and handling customers queries.

3.   Analysis and Organisation

       Candidates should be able to:

       3.1   Demonstrate analytical skills in deepening product knowledge and retail operations.
       3.2   Demonstrate organisation skills in sequencing the information to be presented in a digital sale pitch.

4.   Performance Skills

       Candidates should be able to:

       4.1   Handle routine retail operations for both physical and online retailing.
       4.2   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 Process
        - Paper 3: Demonstrate Selling Skills

Assessment Weighting

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

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Table 1: Assessment Modes and Weightings

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Paper	Mode	Duration	Marks	Weighting
1	Written Examination	1 hr	30	30%
2	Practical Examination – Handling Retail Processes	30 mins	110	30%
3	Practical Examination – Demonstrate Selling Skills			
	Preparation Task	6 hours over 3 weeks	12	40%
	Practical Exam	15 mins	108	

Assessment Timeline

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

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Table 2: Assessment Timeline

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

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[1] Paper 2 and Paper 3 will be on different dates in September, during the N-Level practical examinations period.

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Written Examination

4. The assessment grid for Paper 1 is shown in <u>Table 3</u>. 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.

Table 3: Assessment Grid

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.

	Tasks	Assessment Objectives	Marks
Practical Paper 2	• Received merchandise • Store merchandise • Display merchandise • Fulfil an online order	AO 2.1 AO 4.1	110

	Tasks	Assessment Objectives	Marks
Paper 3 Preparation	• Gather information on assigned merchandise • Recommend ways to maximise sales • Organise information into a script	AO 3.1 AO 3.2	12
Practical Paper 3	• Maintain a professional image • Use appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication skills to engage audience • Perform selling process to maximise sales • Respond to queries/ situations to address customers' needs	AO2.2 AO2.3 AO4.2	108
	Total Marks for Practical Paper 3		120

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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 Process**	**Duration:** 30 minutes

Candidates will play the role of a Retail Sales Associate.

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 30 minutes:

*   Receive merchandise
*   Store merchandise
*   Display merchandise
*   Fulfil an online order
*   Replenish merchandise

A list of fixtures, equipment and materials will be provided for use by the candidates during the examination.

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The Paper 3 question paper will specify a retail product category for candidates to perform a digital sales pitch. Candidates will need to research on the product within the specified category to perform the digital sales pitch.

Practical Paper 3	**Duration: 15 minutes**
Demonstrate Selling Skills	

Candidates to research on the product and do sales pitch on the researched product.

Candidates will play the role of an online sales promoter.

Candidates will be presented with a scenario to demonstrate their ability to perform the following tasks within 15 minutes:
- Maintain a professional image
- Use appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Perform selling process to maximise sales
- Respond to queries/ situations to address customers' needs

A list of fixtures, equipment and materials will be provided for use by the candidates during the examination.

Candidates will carry out the practical examination in the presence of a Marker. The Marker will use a list of standard comments/questions for interaction with the candidates.

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*Note: **Paper 3 Preparation Task prior to Practical Paper 3***

Prior to Practical Paper 3, every candidate needs to complete a preparation task, where they are given a total of 6 hours over a 3-week period during curriculum time, to conduct research on a product on a product of the specified category to sell as an Online Promoter under examination conditions. Every candidate will receive a copy of his/ her product research for reference during the examination, before entering the examination room.

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Description of Paper 3 Preparation Task

Preparation Task	Duration: 6 hours

A total of 6 hours over 3 weeks in computer laboratory will be assigned during curriculum time to facilitate the completion of their preparation task prior to the Practical Paper 3.

These 6 hours provide candidates with the opportunity to gather the following information from the internet:

- assigned merchandise features and benefits.
- relevant cross-selling merchandise images, features and benefits.
- upselling-technique to maximise sales.

Candidates are required to organise their findings and prepare a script that they could use during Practical Paper 3.

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VI   SYLLABUS CONTENT

1.   Introduction to Retailing

This section introduces the concept of retailing and the changing landscape of retailing. Students will learn about the concepts of retailing, and how the changing retail landscape provides career opportunities for students to explore.

1.1   <u>Types of Retail Stores</u>

Students should be able to:

1.1.1   Describe the retailing process

1.1.2   Describe the different channels of distribution:
- Direct selling
- Producer to wholesaler
- Producer to retailer
- Retailing
- Exclusive distribution

1.1.3   Describe the characteristics of the different types of retail stores:
- Specialty stores
- Convenience stores
- Supermarket
- Hypermarket
- Department stores
- e-platform/e-commerce

1.1.4   Demonstrate grouping of merchandise

1.2   <u>Changing retail landscape</u>

Students should be able to:

1.2.1   Determine the factors that affect changes in consumers' behaviour
- Convenience
- More knowledgeable about product features and benefits
- Experiential shopping
- Changes in technology

1.2.2   Describe omnichannel retailing

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2. **Handling Retail Processes**

This section introduces the range of core retailing concepts that are used by both store and online retailing. Students will learn about the range of core retailing concepts that are used by both store and online retailing such as the receiving and storing of merchandise. They will also learn unique retailing concepts pertaining to physical stores and online retailing.

2.1   Receive Merchandise

Students should be able to

2.1.1   Explain the purpose of and the information found in the following documents from suppliers:
- Purchase order
- Delivery note/order
- Invoice

2.1.2   Check merchandise received from suppliers:
- Type and quantity received tally with documentation
- Methods used for filing documents (alphabetical, numerical, chronological, subject, geographical)
- Condition of merchandise received
- Expiry date

2.1.3   Reject unacceptable merchandise due to:
- Wrong items
- Poor quality
- Damaged items
- Expired items

2.1.4   Return and record damaged or incorrect merchandise to suppliers

2.2   Store merchandise

Students should be able to:

2.2.1   Explain the importance of proper handling, packaging, and storing of merchandise

2.2.2   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 proper security and control of merchandise

2.3   Perform stock control

Students should be able to:

2.3.1   Explain the importance of stock control

2.3.2   Differentiate the following terms relating to stock control:
- Stock check
- Stock take
- Stock transfer
- Stock shrinkage

2.3.3   Explain the use of a stock record card

2.3.4   Explain the details in a stock record card

2.3.5   Explain the use of technology in stock management
- Computerised system
- Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)

2.4   Handle stock replenishment

Students should be able to:

2.4.1   Explain the importance of prompt replenishment of stock on shelves

2.4.2   Explain the factors to determine when and how much stock to replenish
- Type of merchandise
- Minimum stock level
- Seasonal demands
- Changes in customers' buying patterns
- Timing

2.4.3   Remove expired and damaged stock from shelves

2.5   Display merchandise in store

Students should be able to:

2.5.1   Explain the importance of visual merchandising

2.5.2   Describe the types and forms of display

2.5.3   Explain the use of planogram for maintaining display

2.6   Housekeeping duties

Students should be able to:

2.6.1   Explain the importance of good housekeeping as part of workplace safety habits

2.6.2   Identify the different ways to maintain cleanliness of the store

2.6.3   Describe how retail staff work together to create a positive shopping experience of a retail store

2.7   Different types of payment methods

Students should be able to:

2.7.1   Outline the different check out methods
- Point-of-sale
- Self-checkout
- Shopping cart
- Mobile point-of-sale

2.7.2   Describe the types of payments
- Cash
- NETS
- Credit card
- Debit card
- E-wallet
- Mobile payment

2.8   **Fulfil an e-order**

Students should be able to:

2.8.1   Outline the procedure to process and manage e-orders:
- Check for stock availability
- Creating a pick list
- Sorting and packing orders
- Packaging and invoicing
- Shipping and tracking

2.9   **Understand a basic layout of an online website**

Students should be able to:

2.9.1   State the features of an online website

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3. **Customer Service, Selling Products and Services**
   This section focuses on the importance of customer service and process of selling products and services to customers. Students will learn about the importance of customer service, and the process of selling products and services to customers. They will learn about different strategies to communicate effectively with customers. Students will also learn the selling process and how they can sell products differently in a face-to-face and in a digital sales pitch.

3.1 Customer service

Students should be able to

3.1.1 Explain the importance of good customer service

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

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

3.1.4 Explain how technologies can enhance customer experience

3.2 Maintain a professional image

Students should be able to

3.2.1 Explain the importance of projecting a professional image to customers

3.2.2 Demonstrate how to project a professional image to customers through non-verbal communication technique:
- Personal grooming
- Eye contact
- Posture
- Etiquette

3.2.3 Describe the characteristics of a successful sales professional:
- Self confidence
- Motivated
- Positive selling attitude
- Service-oriented mindset

3.2.4 Explain the importance of effective communication

3.2.5 Explain the different communication methods
- Face-to-face
- Telephone
- Written communication
- Video chat
- Chatbots

3.3 Identify customer needs

Students should be able to

3.3.1 Explain the factors that could affect customers' buying behaviour:
- Cultural
- Social
- Psychological
- Personal

3.3.2 Apply questioning techniques to identify customer needs
- Closed questions
- Open questions
- Probing questions
- Leading questions

3.3.3 Describe the key elements to highlight when promoting the product
- Product features
- Benefits to end-user

3.3.4 Differentiate between using cross- and up-selling techniques for generating additional sales

3.3.5 Explain the guidelines for making a sales presentation/product demonstration

3.3.6 Describe the different ways to promote the products
- In-store promotion
- External promotion
- Online marketing

3.3.7 Perform sales pitch using digital video streaming

3.3.8 Explain the importance of sales closure

VI   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.