

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES
POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN PUBLIC RELATIONS
MEDIA RELATIONS IJM 7103
DECEMBER 2008 EXAM
TIME ALLOWED: THREE HOURS**

INSTRUCTIONS OF CANDIDATES

1. Section A is **compulsory**.
2. Answer **any three** questions in Section B
3. Poor spelling and grammar will be penalised.

SECTION A

Question 1 – Case Study

You are the Public relations manager for a humanitarian organization, Scope International that has distributed contaminated seed to 5 000 villagers in the country. The sorghum seed is highly toxic and more than 500 villagers that consumed the crop have been admitted at a local hospital, with a hundred more having been treated and discharged for various stomach ailments and shock.

The fields were also opened to livestock, which subsequently died after consuming the crop. In total, 34 cattle and five donkeys died after grazing the poisonous crop. This seed was imported through a seed company based in Zambia, but its origins and variety is still a mystery. Similar instances have been reported in other countries where the humanitarian organization is working with rural farmers to improve food production.

There has been bad publicity about the company in all the media in the Zimbabwe. There is a lot mistrust now between the charity and its stakeholders. Government is planning to ban the organization from operating in the country because of the incident.

- (a) What would be your initial communication strategy to explain and contain the situation to correct the image of your organization? **{10}**
- (b) Identify your target audiences in priority order. Spell out the specific message for each. Consider carefully whether or not the international media should be a target audience. **{10}**
- (c) In a disaster situation, what should be the objectives of public relations activity. List them in priority order and explain how these objectives could be applied to mitigate the problems or issues that this case outlines. **{20}**

SECTION B

Questions 2

As a principle of good public relationships, silence or no comment are the worst choices a practitioner can make when confronted with a legitimate media inquiry. Are there ways of handling these situations without losing credibility as authoritative sources of information? Cite examples. {20}

Question 3

Discuss the three Media Relations techniques and critic their strengths and weaknesses. {20}

Question 4

Critically evaluate the newsworthiness of the following leads. Each lead appeared in news releases mailed to news organizations. Determine if each news release is usable and why.

- i. Regina Morris, Vice President of Marketing and Pricing for Freight Line Ltd, announced a three new simplified pricing programme designed to meet the shipping public's need for cost-effective pricing. {5}
- ii. Demand for gas energy in Zimbabwe could, under the right conditions, increase as much as 50 percent to approximately 20 trillion cubic feet by year 2010, according to a study by the Zimbabwe Gas Association. {5}
- iii. Fire safety education in public schools should be stepped up, according to the City Fire Marshal. {5}
- iv. A coalition of farmers, consumers, students and environmentalists has announced a boycott of all products of the Maynard Corporation. The boycotted products range from chemicals, garden products to sweeteners. {5}

QUESTION 5

Describe the structure of the media in Zimbabwe and critically discuss the importance for public relations practitioners to be aware of media operations. {20}

Ends/