



General Certificate of Education

Applied Business 8610

BS04 Meeting Customer Needs

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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General Comments

This summer's paper posed a similar challenge to the previous year with a mean score of a little over 50%. However, students' performances varied considerably between questions on this paper.

A strength of students' responses to this paper was that the majority appeared to have sound subject knowledge on most of the wide range of topics covered by the questions. This provided students with a sound foundation for developing answers. Most students recognised the differing demands of the questions and responded positively to the clues provided by the command words and the mark allocations.

A common weakness was a tendency by some students to provide generic responses to questions, ignoring the wealth of material given in the case studies which was designed to allow students to apply their answers. Applying answers gives students access to higher mark levels and also makes it easier to make judgements on questions requiring evaluation.

Question One

- (a) This question was designed to provide a straightforward introduction to the examination paper and most students handled it competently. Approximately two-thirds of students were able to identify and describe one relevant method of segmenting a market.
- (b) Most students demonstrated understanding of basic customer needs in the context of *Tui Travel plc* but did not develop their responses further. Students providing higher quality answers brought together detailed subject knowledge and selected information from the case study. They recognised that this was a complex product with high consumer involvement and, therefore, they needed to have information before purchasing, so providing reassurance.
- (c) There were some impressive answers to this question with students drawing effectively on the case material to develop arguments fully. Weaker responses fell into two broad categories. Some students resorted to retelling the story set out in Item A without examining the effects on the business. Other students did not read the question with sufficient care and produced answers of limited relevance by considering the effects on customers and not the business.

Question Two

- (a) This question attracted some good responses. However, a disappointing feature of some answers to this question was that a number of students were unable to identify information, value and suitability or reassurance as possible bases for answers. There was a good use of the context from Item B by many students although some did this without identifying the correct term, especially in the case of reassurance. Some students did not follow the instruction in the question and only provided a single way in which the website helps to meet the needs of the company's customers.

- (b) This was another question that was well answered by many students. The strongest responses demonstrated understanding that *Thomson Airways* could improve its service and increase sales through the operation of this feature on its website. A common error was that some students identified that the business could resolve possible problems but failed to develop the benefits the company might receive in such circumstances.
- (c) Many students possessed relevant subject knowledge and were able to demonstrate clear understanding of core and actual aspects of a product. A large number of students also used Item B well to apply their responses, as well as to provide a basis for evaluation. The best responses not only explained how differentiation was used in these circumstances but developed their answers to include the benefits that could result from offering additional features.

Question Three

- (a) Some students misread this question and addressed the problems identified in the *Manor House* hotel case study rather than considering the choice of a method of data. The other key failing was that a large number of students provided a generic answer without the use of any material from the case study. Despite these common failings there were many strong answers to this question combining relevant knowledge and material from the case study.
- (b) Weaker responses to this question focused on generic answers on the use of ICT by businesses, especially features identified in earlier case studies on the paper, and failed to apply their answers. However, an encouraging number of responses did focus on the advantages to the business of using data storage successfully and retaining contact details thereby solving problems identified in the case study. Using the material in the case study effectively helped students to plan and structure their answers to this question.
- (c) A minority of students were able to identify actions such as training, which would improve employees' skills and linked chosen actions to customer satisfaction and increased sales, thus reducing the problems faced by the *Manor House* hotel. Weaker responses considered market research which would identify, but not solve, the problem and so failed to answer the question directly. Other students showed their knowledge of methods of customer service but did not explain actions that might improve the quality of this aspect of the business's operations.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.