



General Certificate of Education

Applied Business 8610

BS12 Managing People

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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General Comments

Although this paper presented some challenges, stronger students were able to achieve high marks. There are a growing number of very well prepared students who can apply the theory to the business context set out in the paper. The quality of some of their answers, in terms of depth of analysis and understanding of the real world and how people behave, is impressive. Better students tackle the full range of the theory, analyse the position set out in the items in detail and reach firm conclusions supported by their analysis.

A few students and centres still need to make sure that they cover all the basic areas of the specification, eg management functions, in order that students can use appropriate terms with confidence. Weaker students need to understand the need to relate their answers to the item and to be prepared to reach firm judgements on the situations portrayed.

Very few students failed to complete the paper, suggesting that the length of paper was appropriate for the time allowed.

Question One

- (a) (i) Most students understood the term autocratic and were able to describe or develop its key characteristics in context.
- (ii) This question was well answered by many students but others failed to focus on the four key functions of management identified in the specification and gave a very generic, unfocused answer. For Level 2 in the mark scheme, students needed to show how a function related to Rob's role in the business. It was disappointing that a number of students could not distinguish function from skills or styles of leadership of managers.
- (b) This question allowed students to provide a description of the style of leadership and to apply this in context to reach Level 2. As a result, many students made insightful comments about the seeming conflict between autocracy and staff respect. The answers from the better students showed a real ability to go beyond the obvious and to show a depth of understanding, that in the real world, respect is a complex concept. Stronger students developed this further into job security, the motivation of learning new skills and pride in achievements.
- (c) Most students were able to explore the leadership style James adopted in depth and to explain why it was causing problems to the business. In most students' answers a judgement was also made about how significant his leadership style was, with the best answers making mature comments on how staff and or the business would be affected. The strongest answers considered motivation theory and the need for employees to learn new skills. Students reaching Level 3 often talked about the fact that a laissez-faire style of management could cause de-motivation and a lack of effective decision making causing problems for the business. Credit was also given when a contrast was made with the previous style of leadership.

Question Two

- (a) This question produced a full range of responses but, overall, answers were disappointing because many students failed to show that they understood the difference between routine and non-routine decisions or failed to explain how both types of decision would be important to the successful delivery of the Olympic contract. Some students put the decisions in context but did not explain the features of these decisions; weaker students appeared to not understand the terms being used.

- (b) Very few students failed to demonstrate an understanding of why cross-functional teams would be established. The best answers drew directly on Item B and set the need for the cross-functional team into context. Some students still need to develop their skills in applying the basic idea (in this case, teams) to the situation presented in the item, and to directly answer the question, in this case, why a cross-functional team based solution is needed. A few students took this to be a form of matrix style organisation and this was credited. Most answers demonstrated a good understanding of the item and could link this to *ECS* needing to have good project planning or learning from past mistakes.
- (c) Once again, many students understood what critical path analysis was and why it would be important to *ECS* with the management of the Olympic contract. Some weaker students, or those who had no understanding of CPA, focused on the issue of using a computer and, therefore, did not answer the question. Most students produced sound answers about why the complexity of the Olympic contract would demand a robust approach to project management and the role CPA may play in this. There are still a few students who overplay the negatives of CPA claiming that, because it contains estimates of how long each stage will take, it is useless. These students suggest that a project plan is, therefore, not needed. This is naïve, as to not plan for such a project would ensure firstly, that the contract was not awarded to you and secondly, would make a project of this nature impossible to manage. All plans, whether CPA based or not, have to be flexible, and indeed the techniques all build this in to cope with contingencies and problems which may arise.

Question Three

- (a) Most students identified the type of power which Jack used but it was disappointing that some students confused this with a style of leadership and went on to describe the features of autocratic leadership. Weaker students provided generic answers and did not explore this within the context of the Luton store.
- (b) The answers to this question were very mixed, with most students able to identify some of the arguments which Fran could use. However, for higher marks students needed to explain how these arguments could be used to convince Jack about the need for change and the 'Staff First' programme, and many failed to fully explore this in their answer.
- (c) Most students were able to identify some relevant facts and also to make a judgement on whether Jack was correct or not in his views on staff. Better students explored both sides of the argument and demonstrated a good grasp of the issues, such as why Jack may have a view which was out of kilter with others. The stronger students brought in a wide range of evidence from different parts of the unit specification, including motivation theory, whereas weaker students gave very generic answers unrelated to the item.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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