



**General Certificate of Education (A-level) Applied
June 2011**

Applied Business

BS04

**(Specification
8611/8613/8616/8617/8619)**

Unit 4: Meeting Customer Needs (External Test)

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

Students engaged well with the case studies and were able to demonstrate understanding of the specification in context. A significant number of students were able to apply the business theory they had learnt to the circumstances of *BUPA* and *Brook Hall* restaurant. More able students showed real understanding of the contexts and made practical use of analytical and evaluative skills which provided realism and a depth to their answers.

Centres need to ensure that they cover all aspects of the specification. In a number of answers the main features of customer needs and customer service was either not understood or were confused. Similarly, whilst most centres had carefully prepared the key aspects of product development, some students failed to explain core aspects as opposed to either actual or augmented features in context.

Students should be guided by the marks for each question. Long, often repetitious, answers do not score any better than shorter ones but do put pressure on students when responding to later questions. All students answering higher mark questions need to focus on not just stating what actions should happen but also to analyse the effects of these actions on the business. Judgements should be made and fully supported when the questions require this.

Question One

- (a) Many students' answers showed a good understanding of the purpose of websites to a business. However, the responses were not always related to *BUPA* and this left the answers as generic. It is important that full answers make good use of the stimulus material in the case studies.
- (b) Most answers were applied to the context, although a minority of weaker answers simply provided a list which had been supplied in the case study. Many students who attempted to explain the significance of customer health needs showed prejudice against the NHS, often referring to poor quality of service. Better answers showed a good understanding of value and suitability and reassurance, especially with segmentation into the high income socio-economic groups who could afford to pay for private health. It was disappointing that some students demonstrated an understanding of the nature and significance of segmentation but provided no context, so could not access the higher marks.
- (c) It was pleasing to see so many responses that understood the significance of patient involvement with a complex product such as healthcare, but this was not always related to *BUPA* and its business needs. Weaker responses slipped into explaining customer needs and product information often without any application to the scenario. Stronger answers successfully explained the types of information *BUPA* provides and analysed the effect on its business activity of attracting more customers, especially as it is in competition with the NHS.

Question Two

- (a) It was disappointing that some students confused customer research with market research and provided generic answers either explaining methods of research or their advantages/disadvantages. Many students explained the benefits of customer research but without using the scenario. Centres should stress to students that answers should refer to the actual business problem as set out in the examination paper. Without providing context, answers could not move out of the lower mark levels even though a good understanding of this part of the specification was shown. Stronger answers explained the methods used by *Norwich Spire Hospital* and why they will be used to help the business improve its services to patients and the consequences this would have for the business.
- (b) Most responses showed an understanding of core, actual and augmented aspects of product/service development. Weaker responses failed to develop their answers in the context of *Norwich Spire Hospital*. Stronger responses provided and supported a judgement about the most effective way the business could differentiate itself. Other good quality answers compared the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to differentiation before making and supporting a recommendation.

Question Three

- (a) Students displayed a good understanding of product development and were comfortable in explaining relevant issues in the context of *Brook Hall* restaurant. Stronger answers explained the effect of developing new products for the success of the business taking into account competition and the current economic conditions. When answers explained the consequences of product development to this business they scored high marks. Weaker answers occurred when students' responses drifted into customer service or even market research
- (b) This was an open question inviting answers from almost any part of the BS04 specification and an interesting range of responses was provided. It was disappointing that, on occasions, good subject knowledge was provided but with little or no use of the scenario. Occasionally, weaker answers slipped into marketing which was largely irrelevant.

Many students had sound knowledge of customer service as well as the importance of training and product quality. Stronger responses compared different actions that *Brook Hall* restaurant could take and which would be the most effective in both the short term and long term. Where answers made good use of the context of the restaurant they were more likely to score good marks for evaluation. Some good responses compared the consequences of hiring experienced waiters with effective training of existing staff.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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