Examiners' Report January 2007

GCE

GCE Applied Business (8721/8722/9721/9722)

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6916: Investigating People at work
January 2007

1. Overview of the paper

a) Relevance of the previous papers

This was the second January series for 6916 Unit 1: Investigating People at Work. The paper was structured in the same way as the January and June 2006 papers. The final double-page spread for the 'ONE business you have studied' section again contained the emboldened information box in which candidates enter their chosen business's name and activities. Centres are again thanked for training their candidates to ensure both boxes are completed, making it clear to examiners what business their response relates to.

Centres are now aware that a candidate who uses (say) Tesco to answer the question parts on the left hand page is no longer required to use Tesco again when answering those question parts that are on the right hand page. Centres are also aware that each 10-mark final section for each question will normally be written in such a way that a single business can be used to answer all question parts that comprise these 10 marks, and candidates may find it beneficial staying with the same business (always assuming that they have made an appropriate choice in the first place).

All three businesses in this paper were again based on real ones with information such as name or location being fictionalised.

b) Content area and AO mark distribution

The paper was again written using the agreed structure and weightings. Further information on this can be found in the published mark scheme, which confirms the marks awarded against each content area and each Assessment Objective (AO).

c) Interpretation of Unit content

The Unit contains content statements derived from the content for the core units in AS Applied Business. Because the Specification is not written in an NVQ occupational evidence-based format, interpretation regarding exactly what is and what is not covered by each bulleted point is necessary. This is acknowledged on the Edexcel website (www.edexcel.org.uk), for example in the 'Ask Edexcel' section. The policy, when writing 6916 papers, is that relevant topics may be included even if not specifically named in the Unit. Centres are strongly advised to study this and past examiner's reports, and check the Edexcel website on a regular basis for any updates.

d) Businesses studied

Centres are now fully aware that a third of marks are devoted to questions based on the candidates' own choice of business. The advice that has been given on the 'Ask Edexcel' area of the website - as follows - is still relevant.

> "An important challenge that candidates face with this paper is in selecting an appropriate business from those they have studied . . . They will need to carry

> in their heads a list of the (say) five businesses studied, and select from this list the one most suitable to help them answer the 'real business' sections in each question. Some candidates will no doubt choose to use the same business throughout their answers, whereas others will decide to use a different business for each question. What is important? Clearly, does the business chosen have features that relate to the question content, and can it therefore be used to answer the questions? If the answer is 'yes', it is irrelevant whether candidates use one, two or three businesses when answering the paper. It is therefore possible - though perhaps unlikely - that the same business will enable a candidate to construct strong answers for each of the three questions."

As mentioned in the last report, the more opportunity that candidates have to study the workings of real businesses, the greater the quality of learning experience, given the 'applied' nature of this qualification. However, Centres must balance this against the issue of giving 'too much choice' for those who find it difficult selecting a business to answer the final 10-mark sections. Centres will realise the value of exploring with candidates how to select the most appropriate business from those studied in order to best apply their knowledge and understanding. Advice has been given in past reports to the effect that candidates need to study (at least) two contrasting businesses.

2. Comments on individual questions

a) General comments

The paper was designed to assess candidates across the full GCE ability range, and it achieved this purpose. It differentiated between candidates, and all questions were answered as expected with no major misinterpretations. The overall performance showed improvement on January 2006, with an arithmetic mean mark in the high 30s compared with last January's mean mark in the low 30s. It is again acknowledged that many candidates face time pressure in getting the paper completed. Centres are aware that candidates are being tested on the quality of their answers, not on their quantity. The number of answer lines allocated to each part is deliberate, partly indicating the typical maximum length of answer thought necessary to achieve full marks, given the differences in writing style and size. There was less evidence this series compared with January 2006 of candidates copying out parts of the question: as a result, there was typically more effective use made of the space available.

As previous reports have pointed out, candidates do not have to write reams of generic business theory in order to gain the (40 per cent) marks available for knowledge and understanding. Because this is an applied qualification, the remaining 60 per cent of the marks are for application of knowledge, selection/analysis and evaluation, all of which require careful thought, selection and use of knowledge rather than voluminous statements of memorised theory, facts and figures.

In this series, effective application, analysis and evaluation was again lacking. There was also some evidence of candidates answering a different question to than the one set, ignoring the wording of the question, for example deciding to evaluate where the question did not require it (see below). Centres are therefore encouraged to continue working with their candidates on this crucial aspect of examination technique.

As was seen in January 2006, there was a lack of content knowledge displayed. This was particularly evident in the questions based on Investors in People, on aptitude or psychometric testing, and on employment legislation, all which are named in the Unit content or listed in a previous Report. There was also a surprising degree of confusion regarding business functions, even though this is the term specifically used in the Unit, and a topic which has been tested before. This meant that many candidates were not able to access ten or more of the marks available for the paper, and were therefore in practical terms being marked out of something in the order of 75 or 80 rather than 90.

Another weakness was in not following the instructions or guidance in the question. For example, when answering 2 (c), many candidates ignored the instruction to use the given advertisement, and therefore made general 'textbook' statements about what goes in a Job Description and Person Specification. This led to many inadequate answers to a relatively straightforward question. There was also a failure to obey the action verb and/or emboldened information, particularly in the 10-mark sections. An example is 2(g) where - instead of simply giving a specific example of an approach to training - candidates often gave generic information about (say) induction training, which could apply to virtually any business, or else attempted evaluate this training instead of simply giving a specific illustration. Centres are therefore once again encouraged to work closely with their candidates to ensure question requirements are followed, by (for example) discussing the meanings and purpose of the different action verbs such as 'State', 'Identify', 'Describe', 'Explain', 'Analyse' and 'Evaluate'.

There was again a tendency for candidates to apply 'generally' rather than focus the answer on some comparatively unique feature of (say) Boots. Only the more able could 'personalise' their answers to the last section by making specific reference to a key feature of the named business. A good example of this was with 2 (g) (see below). Less well-prepared candidates attempted to apply their answers by using the business name throughout: as a result, they gained some marks. However, although such an answer does at face value apply to Boots, it could equally apply to any other major retailer, whose names could be substituted without a loss of quality, logic or accuracy. Although there is nothing 'wrong' here, there is nothing that analyses or evaluates business-related issues specific to the named business.

A related issue is the continuing tendency of nearly all candidates to identify national businesses such as Tesco, Sainsbury, McDonalds and so on by name (obviously correct) but not by location. It is believed that answers can often be improved when written with a particular branch or outlet being identified and used to illustrate points made. This would go a long way towards ensuring the 'specific application' being encouraged.

b) Performance on question 1

Part (a) was quite well answered. Many candidates scored an easy two marks by naming appropriate stakeholders: the owner, the bank, employees, customers and suppliers were all popular selections. Examples of stronger answers to (ii) included "If the business does not do well the employees are in danger of being made redundant but if the business makes large profits, the employees are likely to receive pay rises". Compare with a less well argued statement "Staff are interested in their wages or salaries", which lacks the 'therefore . . .' development that is expected at AS level.

Part (b) was generally not well answered, with a lot of candidates simply quoting from the context rather than using this information as a basis for description or explanation. There was a tendency for candidates to confuse ownership and control when discussing the issue of Jim Kier making his own decisions. The finance element was the least well applied to the business itself, and some candidates also did not understand the difference between unlimited and limited liability. Strong answers to ownership referred to unlimited liability or 'hands-on' operation of the business as a sole trader. Control was typically best answered, and many candidates gained at least one mark by referring to the relationship with the bank when considering financing: however, too many candidates simply quoted from the context about Jim banking his takings each night, regarding this simple procedure as the essence of financing the business.

Candidates found (c) (i) quite easy, focusing either on the long-term versus short-term features of aims/objectives, or on the objective being a stepping stone to achieving an overall aim. In part (c) (ii), weaker candidates tended to repeat the information, and therefore lost a mark through lack of application to Hardie Bakery. Some tried to just change the words of the aim and the objective around and make a generic comment with the word 'hygiene', with the stronger candidates referring to clean conditions, washing hands, a clean working environment to assist with the aim. Better answers developed the link and drew appropriately from the context: for example, ". . because good hygiene when preparing bread and cakes will lead to good quality products. This will make the customers happy and so provide good customer service". Some answers to part (c) (iii) showed lack of understanding of objectives, whereas better answers started with a clearly stated objective in context (such as "To serve each customer in the shop within 2 minutes of ordering") that could then be related to the aim.

Answers to (d) varied greatly in quality. Some candidates simply did not know what a business function (functional area) was, even though this term has been used before together with examples: see January 2006 question 2(e). Stronger answers stated the stakeholder need - although this had to be inferred in many cases - and framed their answers clearly by explaining 'how' as required. For example, one candidate obtained full marks quite easily by identifying a suitable function (customer service in Tesco), identifying stakeholder needs ("customers needs include expecting a good quality service including product information and with limited delays"), and describing how factors such as good training and high staffing levels help meet these needs.

Part (e) was often not well answered due to lack of knowledge, or by selecting a business difficult to use because of size or complexity. Many candidates obtained the two marks available for knowledge of organisational structure, although some failed to describe with sufficient clarity: huge companies such as Tesco and Sainsbury caused problems for many candidates who were confused between head office and branch structure. Many better answers related to small businesses where candidates appeared to have had work experience or held part time jobs, or had indeed carried out proper prior investigation and really knew the structure. The question required evaluation, which few candidates offered. Those who took their answers beyond knowledge of the structure were usually content to make simple comments about how 'good' the structure was. Only a few considered balancing arguments based on (eg) the typically inverse correlation of organisational size and the speed of communication.

c) Performance on question 2

Many candidates lost marks in (a) and/or (c) as a result of failing to read the question with sufficient care. Although (a) was generally well answered with many gaining full marks, a number ignored the requirement to select 'other' and related their answer to the local paper. Some gave national alternatives, which were not local in nature. The most popular correct alternatives were the local Job Centre, local radio and in the restaurant itself, with the suitability of these often being explained clearly and fully: for example, with reference to the restaurant, ". . . local customers are able to read it and ask any questions . . . encourages these people to apply because they have experienced the environment . . .".

Many candidates gained both marks for (b), by citing specific examples of Job Description content, and backing this up by referring to either the business's or the prospective applicant's use of the Job Description.

Many candidates lost marks in (c) by ignoring the requirement about 'using' the given information, making general statements that did not feature in the job advert. Those who followed the instruction tended to select and quote suitable information from the advertisement, and often gained what proved to be four easy marks.

Part (d) was badly answered due to a lack of knowledge of the two tests. This was disappointing considering these are examples taken from the Unit content. Many candidates confused the two, typically by giving an example of an aptitude test after ticking the psychometric option. A number of these still recovered the final mark by making a relevant statement about the test named in (i), even if wrongly categorised there. An example of an answer sufficient for full marks was "Give them a role play on how they would react if a customer was shouting at them and making a complaint against the staff - because as a Restaurant Manager they are going to come across these situations . . . would also show how they would handle staff being upset".

Part (e) was well answered with the majority focusing on the issues of mobility and/or accessibility at the centre, often supporting their answer by examples of facilities required. Others concentrated on factors such as the need to meet legal requirements or the potential problems of travelling to a distant site. Less well developed answers made simple references which were not sufficiently developed for both marks, such as "They will need to consider the accessibility of the centre she is visiting".

Most answers to (f) gained few if any marks. There was a general lack of knowledge of Investors in People or of its standard (either approach was acceptable for (i)), with many candidates not attempting the question. There was speculation that IiP was, for example, to do with equality of opportunity: some hinted at relevance by occasionally mentioning training or developing people at work, but most were speculative (for example "It is a standard set that means the company sets a high standard of dealing with people"; "An organisation that protects workers"). Many candidates clutched at the term 'Investors' and discussed financial investment in the company. There were slightly stronger answers to (ii), with some references to improved reputation, or a comment such as "B&B Ltd, being an Investor in People organisation, may attract employees because they know that conditions and training may be of a high standard"

Many candidates lost marks in (g) by not really taking account of the statement 'used by your chosen business'. There were many answers that were in effect no more than textbook summaries of approaches to different methods of training. Such answers could apply to virtually all businesses (especially where induction training was the focus). In addition, many candidates tried to evaluate the selected training, usually by making generic statements concerning the textbook advantages of induction, on-the-job or off-the-job training: the question asked for an example of training, not an evaluation. There was generally a lack of evidence of full and detailed research into individual businesses and, as a result, many candidates were unable to do more than make a superficial 'application' through regularly mentioning the business's name in their answers. Examples of suitable approaches gaining most or all marks were when: a candidate described the approach to (on-the-job) training used by a Pharmacy, referring to training related to pharmacy-specific aspects such as giving diabetes and blood pressure testing; a candidate explained how distribution company staff were trained to lift heavy objects; a candidate gave detailed information relating to the 'Passports to Success' training approach used by a large hotel chain.

In (h), many candidates did not identify a business function and therefore lost many of the marks available. The previous January series gave examples of business functions in order to help candidates with their selection: however, this often led to candidates selecting functions that were not best appropriate to the business they had selected (for example, selecting 'production' when basing answers on a retailer). In an attempt to avoid this, no examples of business functions were provided. Candidates must be able to use business terms and language with some fluency, and the term 'business function' should not present candidates with any problems, especially following research into the functional areas of real businesses.

Stronger answers linked the training effectively to the benefits gained, although there were a number of one-sided analytical (rather than evaluative) answers. One example was when a candidate selected the sales function for a large-scale retailer, and analysed issues relating to training in specific areas (eg sale of perfume) or specific retailer-based concerns (cash handling/faulty tills/till training), arguing how these support customers and therefore boost sales.

d) Performance on question 3

Most candidates coped well with (a). Popular choices were the pay increase and widening of duties for (i), and threats to cut staff numbers or move A&E for (ii). Candidates could argue the case both for and against the widening of duties.

There were a lot of unclear answers to (b) (i), some of which contained a basic relevant point - for example, "It sounds as if they are more important than before" - but which then failed to develop it. The better answers tended to argue the apparent greater relevance of 'Hospital' rather than 'General' - or 'Services' rather than 'Workers' - because this relates more appropriately to the working environment, or suggests that these employees are more clearly part of the team. Answers to (b) (ii) often contained valid 'negative' arguments to the effect that failure to have motivated staff would put lives at risk (utilising appropriately the hospital context).

Popular choices for (c) were minimum wage and the Working Time Directive. In general, candidates showed some knowledge (particularly of the two most popular) although there were many imprecise answers: for example, stating "they won't lose out on money" or "lower people like cleaners rather than doctors will still be paid fairly". There was a tendency to confuse 'minimum' with 'fair'. Answers such as "It is illegal for staff to be paid below the minimum wage" and "Under this law staff are not allowed to work more than 48 hours a week" gained some credit, but rarely could a candidate develop a full, factually accurate answer in the context of hospital work. Some did include appropriate factual detail, by for example stating minimum wage figures. There was some confusion between the Employment and Employment Rights Acts, and also confusion of both of these with equal opportunity legislation: few candidates could give specific accurate information over and above a single basic fact such as a reference to maternity leave. In general, therefore, marks were again lost here due to many candidates not knowing the legislation.

Answers to (d) tended to be either very good or very weak. There was some evidence of misunderstanding the question, with some candidates describing either or both the Mission Statement and the Plan. Better answers tended to quote parts of the Mission Statement, and then compare with aspects of the Plan in order to draw appropriate conclusions. For example: "The Mission Statement says the hospital 'provides the finest diagnostic facilities and highest quality clinical care'. However, if the proposals . . . come in, the hospital will not be able to provide the finest quality care if it shuts down the A&E. Also, the expected cut in the number of staff . . ."

Half the marks in (e) were available for describing how HASAWA was implemented in the chosen business, and the other half for analysing employee benefits. Candidates tended to answer one - rather than both - of these aspects well, so many answers gained only half marks. Weaker answers tended to quote general information from the Act, or to over-elaborate the point that employees would 'feel safe', suggesting again a lack of research into the named business. The quality of some candidates' research was evident in clear and applied descriptions of health- or safety-related specific issues, which differentiated these answers from those outlining generic matters that could apply to virtually any business in addition to the one named.

Part (f) proved difficult, and there were many incomplete answers (no doubt partly due to time pressure). Although there was reasonably good knowledge of Maslow's levels, many candidates could not apply them effectively to the chosen business, or made simple statements about the levels without really answering the question: for example "They [checkout staff] are given the basics, food, water to survive, also a good amount of breaks, you have time to yourself and a lot [of time] to socialise". Although checkout staff were by far the most popular group of employees used, candidates' answers tended to lack business specificity or application to the job roles. In other instances, less than ideal - or inaccurate - illustrations were given, such as "… achieve the esteem level because the staff are well motivated and trained and they do gain from bonuses if they work well and also from holidays . . .". The stronger answers often explained how the lower levels were met, by giving examples related to factors such as contracts, facilities and pay rates, and then explored the extent to which esteem was met by considering whether elements such as individual responsibility or praise featured. For example: "The Swan Hotel does allow [duty managers] to reach Maslow's esteem level. It provides their basic physiological needs through paying them enough to . . . It offers them job safety with an annual wage and contract of full-time permanent employment . . . Staff parties allow managers . . to form relationships . . . Bonuses and rewards . . ." . Some candidates went further and presented arguments concerning self-actualisation, which was not of itself required.

3. Future developments

Future papers will continue to use diagrams, pictures, charts and other visual stimuli in order to assist some candidates. For the immediate future at least, the booklet will remain 20 pages in length: each question will be six pages (including a blank page where relevant), with the final 10-mark section taking up the last two of these pages. The opening instruction, on page 2, for candidates to apply their answers to businesses in the (fictionalised) location, and to businesses of their choice, has now been removed in order to preserve more space for candidate answers: it is not believed to be necessary since questions are framed in such a way as to require application.

The option to exclude a particular type of business (such as the exclusion of councils in the June 2006 series) remains for the 10-mark question sections. The effect of this instruction is that candidates must study a minimum of two contrasting businesses in order to answer successfully the last parts of each question.

In terms of Unit content clarification, Centres will be aware that the June 2006 report listed key legislation. Employment questions often use the terms 'recruitment' and 'selection'. For the purposes of answering, recruitment ends with the submission of the completed application, and selection therefore begins at the shortlisting stage.

As explained in past reports, because markers will not be familiar with all businesses chosen by candidates, benefit of doubt will still be given on factual matters except where is an obvious factual error that affects the quality of the answer (and therefore marks awarded). However, Centres are again strongly advised to instruct candidates not to use any fictionalised business from the specimen or a past paper when answering the final 10-mark sections. The reason for this advice is that the relatively limited amount of detail available about these businesses will almost certainly not allow candidates to access the full marks available for the question part(s).

Marks will continue to be allocated for applying answers effectively: ie, where relevant by using more than the mere name of the business in the answer. Centres will no doubt continue working to ensure a more 'applied' approach is adopted by candidates in their answers, noticeably to the final 10-mark sections.

6917: Investigating Business
January 2007.

Administration:

The majority of centres sent in their portfolios within the correct timeframe and to the correct moderator/ address. A small number did go to Edexcel. A small number of centres did not include any identification information.

Mark sheets were not present on all samples, some centres had designed their own and did not use the Edexcel format. Some centres who did not complete mark sheets listed the marks per theme on the candidates' work.

Few centres provided evidence of internal verification/ standardisation. There was little, if any, evidence of standardisation however, in a number of centres only one assessor was evident.

Authentication signatures were missing, either staff or candidate, in a significant number of portfolios and moderators had to contact centres and chase up for these.

Where centres design their own "front sheets" it is important to ensure that all the relevant information is present i.e. candidate and centre name and number, centre marks, moderator marks, assessor's and candidate's signatures, signature of internal moderator etc. This was not always the case and delayed the moderation process somewhat as a result.

Overall performance was improved. Centres had used the information in the Chief Examiner's Report and from the INSET events and had, in the main, had better choice of businesses. There were fewer centres that submitted presentations only this window thus allowing candidates to access high mark bands.

Annotation of the work varied from fully indicating where criteria had been met to virtually nothing except for a final mark. Annotation is best indicated via the Mark Band achieved and the area of the spec met so, eg MB1a indicates area/theme/strand (a) has met Mark Band 1; MB2b indicates that (b) has met Mark Band 2 and so on rather than trying to annotate via the Assessment Objectives (AO's).

One major concern is still the inaccessibility of many of the portfolios with work either tightly packed into plastic wallets, in ring binders or clipped into plastic folders (this simply makes the process of extracting the work more laborious than should be the case). The preferred format is loose-leaf, treasury-tagged sheets that can be easily opened and read.

General Issues with the Specification:

Areas of the Specification:

The choice of business to be planned is vital to the success of the candidate in this unit. The same business must be used throughout the stands for the unit

For the majority of centres the "planned businesses" were suitable however there were some centres that investigated existing businesses and could not get the required detail of costs, suppliers, etc. Some candidates used businesses that were too large and found the amount and range of information and data required to be excessive and did not perform as well as those that used a micro/small business.

The following issues were evident:

1. Some candidates planned to set up a business in which food was sold. There is a large amount of food handling, storage, food premises legislation which was not covered by the candidates. This type of business should be avoided.

2. The use of school premises as the location of a number of businesses with the staff and students as the intended market restricted the achievement of higher grades as learners were working with an unreal market place. Rents, business rates and other associated costs were not identified with the candidates assumed that costs such as refurbishment, rent and rates would not need to be paid with the school/ college providing rooms as offices free of charge. The restricted market place and opening hours reduces the potential sales and results in unrealistic business planning.

3. The use of candidate's homes as the base for the business caused similar issues to point 2 above in relation to rent, insurance and utilities.

4. Lack of realism, especially in sales and total wages showing in cash flows.

5. Some planned businesses required large amounts of capital to start up and/ or were planned to have a large market. This approach increased the amount of research and work that the candidates had to undertake.

6. In accuracies in the construction of cash flows. Break evens and other financial documents.

7. Follow through mistakes, i.e. differences in statements relating to the business made in answers to (a) and (c), lack of follow through.

8. Strand D is still seen as a bolt on in many centres, however the application of ICT to the business was much improved overall this year.

Another major issue with the work presented for moderation was where a small number of centres only sent presentation slides with no detailed witness statements or supporting reports.

6918: Investigating Marketing
January 2007

Administration:
The work was mostly submitted together with the appropriate forms – mark record sheets, "OPTEMS" and the like although not all were fully signed to indicate authenticity and this had again to be requested separately.

Where centres design their own "front sheets" it is important to ensure that all the relevant information is present ie candidate and centre name and number, centre marks, moderator marks, assessor's and candidate's signatures, signature of internal moderator etc. This was not always the case and delayed the moderation process somewhat as a result.

In general, marks on the work conformed to those on the OPTEMS with occasional discrepancies. Assessment was more accurate than in the previous two series with a tendency to leniency evident in the majority of decisions. Annotation of the work varied from fully indicating where criteria had been met to virtually nothing except for a final mark. Annotation is best indicated via the Mark Band achieved and the area of the spec met so, eg MB1a indicates area/theme/strand (a) has met Mark Band 1; MB2b indicates that (b) has met Mark Band 2 and so on rather than trying to annotate via the Assessment Objectives (AO's).

Most work was again received on time although there were instances where Centres received Moderators' details late and some candidate work was also sent late by centres.

One major concern is still the inaccessibility of many of the portfolios with work either tightly packed into plastic wallets, in ring binders or clipped into plastic folders (this simply makes the process of extracting the work more laborious than should be the case). The preferred format is loose-leaf, treasury-tagged sheets that can be easily opened and read.

General Issues with the Specification:

There was less evidence of the largely "academic" approach eg candidates producing masses of theory on sampling or pricing and more evidence of the required "applied" approach where the assessment requirement is more directly met in a practical way through a suitable choice of product or service. In the cases of the best work an integrated approach was apparent with the choice of product or service justified by careful research from several sources that, in turn, informed the final choice of marketing mix. Weaker approaches were found where candidates tried to launch or re-launch a whole range of products or services (sometimes a complete business or brand) and this made for real difficulties when detailed consideration of the "mix" was attempted eg it was difficult to come up with effective pricing when candidates often regurgitated pricing theory to cover a range without arriving at any actual prices. As with "Investigating Business" in Unit 2, the best approach was when candidates took simple products or services and came up with practical suggestions for a suitable marketing mix that incorporated a clear idea of product, price, promotion and place (distribution) ie the "4P's" linked clearly to the market research. Weaker work underestimated eg the costs of promotion and advertising and made assumptions about budgets that would be unsustainable in reality, emphasising again the need for clear, simple ideas, costs and prices. In the best cases, candidates were able to produce eg mock-ups of advertising and promotional campaigns and these added to the whole approach.

Areas of the Specification:

(a) In some cases, candidates had been required to investigate the market, brand, range or some generic product rather than a particular product or service and this made for difficulties of analysis. Often, the actual product or service was not well explained (candidate and assessor assuming it too obvious to require any explanation) and marks were lost as a consequence. Where candidates had been guided to a clear choice, the outcome was usually better. What is needed is a clear description of the product or service with reasons given for the choices made and for the marketing objectives, segmentation and target market to be clearly explained as well. There is no need to make the (assignment) brief too elaborate, candidates tended to become distracted by other issues eg product design and lost sight of the requirements of the specification as a result. Better work demonstrated a clearer linkage of the product to the marketing objectives, segmentation and the target market together with some justification for these, raising the possibility of marks in Band 3. Often, all that was needed was for the candidate to add the word “because” together with suitable reasoning to allow the higher marks to be earned.

(b) There was good evidence of suitable research as the basis for much of the unit coverage. In some cases there was too much theory (often of “sampling” itself), restricted sampling and little linkage to the research when the marketing mix was later discussed. In the better work, candidates had investigated a wider range of sources (including interviews with relevant people and the use of focus groups) and then linked their analysis to the target market and segmentation highlighted in (a) above. Sometimes primary data was too restricted or inappropriate eg conclusions based on a sample of 5; or a product targeted at 16-20 year olds based on a survey of older adults! Stronger candidates were able to use good research findings to link analysis to the target market identified above or as a basis for a different target market altogether.

(c) Most candidates were able to discuss the appropriate “P’s” but better marks arose where these were developed through links to research findings, especially in relation to the target market/segment identified in (a) above. Much theory was also in evidence with weaker candidates failing to apply this to the chosen mix. One improvement in this area would arise where the reasons and justification for links between the elements of the chosen mix are fully explained. In many cases candidates had been encouraged to use marketing tools such as the Boston Matrix, Ansoff, etc and many of them applied these to the mix in attempt to justify what was there. In reality, the nature of the choice of product or service rendered discussion of these tools largely irrelevant since they are more commonly used in the case of larger, multi-product businesses.

(d) Any evaluation needs to be of the individual components of the suggested mix rather than just of the chosen product or service as was sometimes the case. Better evaluations arose where candidates used “SWOT” and/or “PEST” - style approaches (and their variations). In some cases, evaluation occurred throughout the work and in the weaker cases simple, unjustified statements were much in evidence and the whole was more about the tasks or assignment rather than about the required evidence presented. (It should be pointed out that there is a slight discrepancy between 3.4 in the “What you need to learn” section of the specification and (d) in the “Assessment Criteria” grid although in practice, this does not appear to be a problem)

6919: Investigating Electronic Business
January 2007

To successfully achieve this unit, learners need to demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding and application of knowledge across the full range and scope of the unit outcomes, in particular the unit assessment outcomes/criteria, the specific AO's, and the mark band (MB) distributions (Applied Business Awards Specifications Pages 37 and 41). In as much as learners need to show a clear understanding of the subject and the practical application of the unit requirements from a balanced contribution across the four knowledge/applications Strands, the related AO's and marking criteria bands.

Therefore, in relation to the Unit specifications (p35 and 36) learners should:

- Show knowledge and understanding of a range of business situations and web based concepts.
- Be aware of relevant and up-to-date information from a range of sources in relation to an online presence.
- Use adequate techniques and methods on the collection of information, analysis and design of a business web site.
- Be awareness of the issues, problems or opportunities of website/online presence.
- Be able to prioritise evidence and arguments
- Show judgement in the selection and presentation of findings
- Present additional examples and appropriate materials in support of a conclusions
- Demonstrate the application of techniques and methods in the design and building of a website in an appropriate business context.
- Evaluate the business context and is aware of the issues, problems or opportunities poses by a web presence.

In particular, the work sampled indicated appropriate website being identified by learners and in general, an explanation of the features and purpose of the sites, how they functioned and supported the possible achievement of the businesses objectives as required for Strand (a) AO1/2, basic examples were included to show the linkage between the website and the business objectives. However, detailed analysis of how a business can use a web presence to meet its objectives and an evaluation (with examples) of how these are met by a web presence was limited.

To ensure the full development across Strand (a), to MB3, an appropriate selection of businesses and websites should present, if possible contrasting site/businesses should be encouraged to support further evaluation. e.g. B2B, B2C or G2C type sites

For Strand (b), a single business needs to be selected to explore its strengths and weaknesses in an internet presence. The business choice is important for the depth of analysis, evaluation and the selection of drawbacks possible in moving from MB1 through to MB3. Learners should include examples of the drawbacks to having an internet presence relevant for that business and provide any recommendations for improvements in the website, in relation to the stated business aims and objectives.

Evidence of independent research into the influencing factors of designing and producing a realistic online presence must be identified with some justification given as required for Strand (c) AO3. The depth of analysis and the development of realistic factors for the business must be considered, including the consideration of legislation, costs and maintenance/training expenses and in addition, a justification and/or consideration of the business opportunities a website could offer.

In the sample, candidate's did demonstrated a good understand of the design and build processes for a creating a website for AO1 & A02 in criteria Strand (d).
The website can be an existing or planned business, provided it is realistic and offers a full opportunity for learners to fulfil the requirements of Strand. The use of initial plans and outlines for a website were generally appropriate for the business as required to satisfy MB1, However, learners need to include evidence e. g. flow diagrams, site layouts, page sketches and links, navigation structures and detailed content relating to the images, clips, page linkage and content outlines to support the construction of the site. These must be appropriate for the business and the subsequent website. Consideration of the value of the website, for the described target audience, its ease of use and user interface is important for gaining MB3, i. e. a consideration of how the site will be seen by users and its value to customers.

Authentication

For the web site as described/designed for Strand (d) MB2 & MB3, centres should include evidence to confirm originality of leaner work, especially in relation to the website functionality and appropriateness for the business and user. The use of witness statement, tutor comments, observation checklist and signed screen/output documents should present in the material.

Standardisation

Consistent marking and standardisation within centres was evident however in assessing higher performance, assessors need to consider the depth and scope of material in terms of quality of examples and quality and reasoning of evaluation in the learner's work to award the higher MB3 marks.

Enhancing Assessment

Centre should ensure, especially in relation to the higher mark bands that clear evidence of analysis of how a business can use a web presence to meet its objectives and an evaluation with examples of how these businesses set objectives are met by a web presence is included for MB3 strand (a).

Also for MB3 across the strands more detailed analysis and consideration of legislation, on going costs of maintenance, training and updating expenses be included. Learners should be encouraged to explore and evaluate the influences, needs and design considerations for using a website to support a business in its achievement of objectives. Provide a justification and/or reasoned consideration of the business opportunities a website could offer should be encouraged, with appropriate examples.

For the design and operation of a website Strand (d), Learners should be encouraged to provide a working example of their designed website to achieve MB3. To do this learners need to include authenticated evidence of navigation, examples of images, clips, page linkage and content outlines to support its construction and functionality.

6920: Investigating Customer Service
January 2007

Moderation Process

The external moderation process was deemed to be straightforward.
Overall centres forwarded samples on time and an accurate number of sample portfolios were provided i.e. ten portfolios with the highest and lowest grade included.

Statements of authentication were present in the samples moderated for this series. However these were often not signed by either the student or the assessor. Centres should ensure authentication statements are fully competed when submitting evidence for external moderation.

Assessment Objectives and Mark Band Evidence

Overall it was felt the approach in delivering the unit was inconsistent in that, some centres asked candidates to produce written work and then extracted the presentation from the written work therefore, candidates were able to provide detailed evidence to meet the assessment objectives and higher mark bands. In contrast, to centres where only a Power Point presentation and Witness Statement were submitted as evidence. Lack of detail in the presentation and the witness statements prevented candidates in accessing the higher mark bands.

Strand A

Overall candidates presented a description/explanation of internal and external customers and their needs and expectations. However, in some cases candidates only focused on one business. Centres should encourage candidates to select contrasting businesses. The needs and expectations of customers were identified however, in some cases customer needs and expectations were very similar or generic as a result of selecting similar organisations i.e. Morrison and Tesco. Evidence for how the organisations met customer needs and expectations was weak or not addressed.

Strand B

Strengths and weaknesses of customer service activities were implied in some portfolios. In main the evidence for this particular assessment objective was weak, as candidates focused on strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and not customer service activities. Candidates should be encouraged to elaborate on the strengths and weakness stating why they felt this was a strength or weakness for each activity and then develop this further by making suggestions for improvements for identified weaknesses.

Strand C

Attempts were made by candidates to describe/ explain how the chosen business maintains, monitors and improves customer service. In some cases lack of research limited candidates in generating the evidence required for this assessment objective and mark bands.

Strand D
Candidates identified and described UK legislation well. Application of UK legislation to the chosen business was basic however, the choice of business in some cases limited candidates in applying EU legislation. Evidence of working procedures was weak or not addressed by candidates. Useful information on EU legislation can be found on the following websites.

http://www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/topics.htm
http://www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/topics1/pdf1/bencheu.pdf
http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/emar/wtr.pdf

Assessment
Assessors should be encouraged to annotate achievement of assessment objectives and mark bands against the evidence.

Unit Guidance
Centres need to ensure candidates select contrasting businesses as per unit specification; this will enable candidates to generate evidence requirements for the higher mark bands. It is recommended that centres do not select Shopping Malls or Retail Parks as may limit scope for developing evidence for higher mark bands.

Centres need to encourage candidates to research fully (Primary and secondary) in order to support the evidence requirements for the higher mark bands for each strand. Analysis of primary research should be included as evidence, together with secondary research.

It is recommended that the centre encourage candidates to produce written work and then extract the presentation from the written work, this will enable candidates to submit detailed evidence towards the assessment objectives and higher mark bands. Candidates should submit both elements of evidence for this unit. A presentation supported by a detailed witness statement and a written report.

It is recommended that a school/college is only used to provide evidence for strand A. Centres should encourage candidates to investigate the same organisation for strand B, C, and D.

Grade boundaries
At the E/U boundary candidates demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of key customer service concepts. At this grade boundary, candidates presented limited evidence of application, analysis and evaluation. For strand A candidates showed a basic understanding of different types of customers and their needs and expectations for two organisations. Research for this strand was limited or implied. For strand B basic/limited application of knowledge and understanding was demonstrated for strengths, weaknesses and recommendations of customer service activities. Strand C Evidence of research was implied/limited at this grade boundary. Strand D For strand D at this grade boundary, evidence of Legislation was limited in particular, EU legislation. Legislation links to the organisation's product/service was limited

At the A/B boundary candidates were able to demonstrate in depth knowledge and understanding of key customer service concepts. Evidence was supported by good research, clear application, analysis and evaluation. For strand A candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of different types of customers and their needs and expectations for two organisations. Analysis and evaluation was effective for this strand. For Strand B strengths and weaknesses of customer service activities were analysed and evidenced, suggestions for improvements were recommended based on research. For Strand C candidates evidenced relevant up to date research to demonstrate how customer service is monitored and maintained within the organisation. For Strand D at this grade boundary, candidates were able to apply and evaluate UK customer service legislation effectively. Evaluation of EU legislation was limited.

6921: Investigating Promotion
January 2007

This is the third series for this paper and it is clear that candidates are now familiar with the format and that they are generally tying their answers back well to the scenarios given. The two main scenarios, a firm making and selling cosmetics and a restaurant, allowed candidates to draw on their own knowledge and understanding of markets. Nearly every candidate attempted every question, which is the right approach as frequently some marks can be gained if question are read carefully and a common sense approach is taken to answering them.

Where marks were lost this was mainly due to three, unfortunately perennial, problems:

a) Not reading the questions carefully enough.
b) A lack of basic knowledge of terminologies.
c) Not relating the answers to the specific context given.

When questions are not read carefully enough candidates are often throwing away marks completely needlessly. For example, Q1(a) asked for **'two other'** examples of PR, yet some candidates used the two examples already given in the stem.

Even though this is an applied paper, it does assume some basic recall of knowledge and understanding of standard promotion terminologies, especially when they are written in the unit syllabus. There were many candidates, for example, who did not know what PR, press releases, ambient advertising and direct marketing meant.

This is an applied paper and every question is set in a specific context. With very few exceptions there will be some, and usually most, marks assigned to application in that context. There may be general comments and explanations that would be correct in the specific context, and they will earn marks, but many candidates do not go that step further and express their answers within the given context. For example, for Q2(b) candidates were asked to consider 'the same advertisements' being used in 'the EU'. Full application required candidates to consider constraints for advertisement in the EU, compared to the UK, but also for candidates to apply these to the specific advertising approach being outlined in the stem to Q2.

Examples of these problems are also given in the comments below.

Comments on specific questions

It is important to note that these comments inevitably sound very negative, because they are being made so that candidates will learn from them and improve their answers in future papers. There were very many excellent answers being given and candidates should congratulated for these.

1(a). A very large number of candidates still have a very poor understanding of what Public Relations (PR) means and are unable to distinguish this method of promotion from other general methods of promotion, such as advertising, or promotional offers such as money off vouchers. Only one fifth of candidates scored both marks. For some this was due to the fact that they gave press releases and/or press conferences when they had been specifically instructed to state 'two other' examples.

1(b). The poor understanding of the term PR also meant that many candidates were unable to gain many marks for this part of Q1, and nearly one third failed to score any marks. Most candidates did however refer to the objectives of the business and through that were often able to pick up some marks even though their understanding of PR was poor.

1(c). Yet again very poor understanding of the term meant that the majority of candidates did not score any marks for this question. A common mistake was to interpret press releases as advertising in the press. The question was fairly challenging, but misunderstanding the term made it almost impossible to answer. It was also important that candidates identified the correct elements of Angst's business and ones that would relate to a press release. Many choose concessions as the feature and said that because concessions were being used the generally public needed to be told about them. Whilst that is true that does not, of itself, create a need for a press release and basic forms of advertising would be more appropriate.

2(a). The first part of this question should have been fairly straightforward, and the Sex Discrimination Act was the most obvious choice. Many candidates chose totally inappropriate acts, such as the Race Relations Act, which had no obvious connection to the stem. Others chose acts that might have been appropriate, such as the Sale of Goods Act, but could not justify why that should be checked in part (ii). There was nothing in the stem to suggest that that Act would be broken although there were some good answers that did provide a reason that the stem could allow for. Some candidates simple wrote Discrimination Act and others got the name of the correct act wrong.

Part (ii) seemed to present additional problems for candidates. Those who had totally inappropriate acts in part (i) were unable to provide explanations here. Many candidates who had given an acceptable act in (i) did not consider the context of the question, which was about advertising. With the Sex Discrimination Act, for example, some candidates wrote about treating the models fairly which is an employment issue not a marketing promotion issue.

2(b). The better candidates scored reasonably on this question, but again there were problems for candidate who did not read the question carefully enough. This was still a question about advertising, and not about the EU in general. Mention of quotas and tariffs were not uncommon. Some candidates assumed that the pictures of the models would have to change because the models would not be of the ‘right’ nationality, which shows a poor understanding of how and why this kind of advertising is used. In extreme cases some candidates even claimed that if the advertisements were made in England they would have “no black models” and therefore the models would have to be changed.

3(a). The context here was very well understood and very few candidates failed to score any marks. At the same time less than half of the candidates gained both marks. The main reason for this was that many simply repeated the same point, slightly altered, for the second reason. There were also good answers that related the colours to gender and even to contrasting visual effects. The expected, and most common answers, related to branding and impact.

3(b). Again this was well answered by most candidates. One fairly common mistake was an assumption that Angst would have to set up a website, when of course that would already have bee set up by the department stores and major clothing chains. For these types of questions students should get into the habit of elaborating their answers rather than using just one word answers. As the word 'produce' was used in the question, that word by itself was not sufficient to gain a mark.

3(c). Ambient advertising has featured as a main question in a previous paper and it was disappointing to see how many candidates were unable to select a suitable characteristic to compare the specific example of the serviettes against that of the pop-ups. Nearly half of the candidates either did not know what ambient advertising involved or selected unsuitable qualities that did not apply to the serviettes. The approach that should have been taken was to select an appropriate feature, such as being outside of the home, and apply it to both methods of promotion.

There were some candidates who selected characteristics of specific types of ambient advertising, but these were not particularly common characteristics and applied to other forms of promotion, for example, being able to ‘pick it up and carry it away’ or ‘put it in your pocket’. This may have applied to some typical examples, such as beer mats, and serviettes, but it is not particularly common as should be made clear by the many other examples, for example advertising on the side of buses to using laser lights on the side of a building.

4. This required application to a very specific age range of 16 to 21, which most candidates did refer to. They also provided a sound basic reason for why this would be effective or not. Only the better candidates responded to the instruction to evaluate and give arguments from both sides.

5(a). This would have a very easy question to answer if candidates had only responded to the required effect of an 'action'. A very significant majority did not and this suggests that candidates were not familiar with AIDA and what each of the objectives of an advertisement means in practice. Many of the elements of the Galangal advertisement could have lead to actions, and justifying this was the purpose of part (ii), but many candidates selected elements that would draw attention or interest and argued for that in part (ii). It should have occurred to these candidates that attracting attention was what was being asked for in 5(b), at which point they should have re-visited (a) and considered the right approach.

5(b). This was well answered by all but a very few candidates, with many scoring full marks.

6(a). This was not well answered. It is acknowledged that this is not a named feature of promotion in the syllabus but it should be covered when considering print media. It is a major consideration for businesses when choosing which paper or magazine to advertise in. The very best candidates did show that they understood what the accreditation was doing and how it would, therefore, be of a benefit to the publishers.

6(b). Most candidates were able to score marks on this question with some very well developed and explained answers. Many of the features shown in the stem were followed through to provide a wide spread of acceptable answers. Some candidates, however, assumed that because this was a free paper the advertisers would be able to place their advertisements in it free of charge. Advertising in free papers is now a very widespread method of advertising and students should known that the reason most of these free papers survive is solely because of the advertising revenues. The same is now true of some major newspapers.

7. This was well answered by candidates who thought carefully about the context and considered what management at the restaurant could sensibly do to check if advertising in the free paper was cost effective. This was a typical question where the candidates should have put themselves into the position of being involved in the marketing for the business and asking themselves 'how am I going to prove that the advertisement has, or has not been effective?' Most candidates used the sales or booking records before and after, the simple research process of asking customers or a redeemable voucher.

8(a). This caused very little problem for the vast majority of candidates, but candidates do need to ensure that the chosen media does correspond to what was asked for. A catalogue, for example is not a national glossy magazine, whereas many of the magazines that are included with the weekend newspapers are.

8(b). The answers here were disappointing with only the very best candidate scoring both marks and nearly half of the candidates scoring no marks. In both parts candidates failed to gain the marks because they did not read the questions carefully enough.

In part (i) this was because they ignored the word 'this' or the word 'limitation'.

In part (ii) this was because candidates did not consider the effect in terms of the way the business carried out its promotion but in terms of the effect of the limitation on such factors as how many people it would reach.

8(c). For far too many candidates this was another question where failing to read each word carefully enough meant that no marks were scored. The typical error was to ignore the phrase 'the elements of the advertisement' and to write about the magazine instead. Most candidates, however, did write about the advertisement itself and scored well, but only the best candidates tied their answers back to the nature of the target population.

9(a). The vast majority of candidates provided all the required details.

9(b). Again this was very poorly answered by a very significant minority of candidates. The main reason was not responding to the most important, but very simple, point of the question. This was about 'moving image' as part of AIDA and yet nearly 40% of candidates answered the question with no reference to moving image at all. The candidates who did take this on board answered well but only the best candidates referred to the importance of moving image in gaining attention or generating interest.

9(c). Generally well answered but weaker candidates simply identified the information rather than explaining how the advertisement provided the information.

9(c). This did expect more than just the statement of a reason, i.e., also saying why this came from the advertisement being shown in a cinema. Just under half of the candidates gave this fuller description for the full 2 marks.

10(a). This was well answered by most candidates although some did not seem to know what direct marketing was.

10(b). About one quarter of the candidates was unable to give a valid objective and this also prevented them from scoring in part (ii). This suggests that candidates did not check all parts of the question before they chose a suitable example in part (a). At that point they should have gone back and selected a different business and product in (a). They could then have given a valid objective here. For candidate who did have a valid objective part (ii) was generally well answered but again only the best candidates explained why the direct marketing was particularly important.

10(c). This was disappointingly answered by many. Some candidates did not list costs. Other candidates did not make their costs distinct enough, and some candidates listed costs that did not apply to the chosen promotion. Only one fifth of candidates were able to gain the full 3 marks on what should have been a very easy question.

Some candidates not answer this question, even though they had answered parts (a) and (b). This suggests that they may not have turned over the page. It clearly said QUESTION 10 IS CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE at the bottom of page 15. Candidates should always check the final pages of any paper to ensure that have answered all parts.

Future Development

The points listed below include comments made in previous reports.

1. **The applied approach** – All businesses used in these papers relate to real businesses, either named or with the names changed. Preparation for this paper should therefore include as much study of the promotional techniques used by real businesses as possible.

2. **Terminologies** – For many candidates a huge number of marks are being lost simply because they do not know what basic promotion terminologies mean. Centres need to devise methods of ensuring that basic knowledge is there.

3. **Reading the question** – Again, a huge number of marks are being unnecessarily lost, simply because candidates have not read the question carefully enough. The suggestion here is that students should be give examples of past question and be asked to re-write them to show exactly what each part is asking for. Alternatively, they could be asked to write a mark scheme for the question, and this could then be compared to the actual mark scheme.

Centres need to ensure that their candidates are not being disadvantaged simply because of the layout of the paper. Additional work outside of the specified area on the paper, or on additional sheets, is totally acceptable, but, when this is done, it is vital that the candidates indicate somewhere on their answers for a specific question that they are using additional paper or completing the answer somewhere else in the actual paper. Preferably they also indicate where the rest of the answer is.

6922: Investigating Enterprise
January 2007.

Administration:

The majority of centres sent in their portfolios within the correct timeframe and to the correct moderator/ address. A small number did go to Edexcel. A small number of centres did not include any identification information.

Mark sheets were not present on all samples, some centres had designed their own and did not use the Edexcel format. Some centres who did not complete mark sheets listed the marks per theme on the candidates' work.

Few centres provided evidence of internal verification/ standardisation. There was little, if any, evidence of standardisation however, in a number of centres only one assessor was evident.

Authentication signatures were missing, either staff or candidate, in a significant number of portfolios and moderators had to contact centres and chase up for these.

Where centres design their own "front sheets" it is important to ensure that all the relevant information is present i.e. candidate and centre name and number, centre marks, moderator marks, assessor's and candidate's signatures, signature of internal moderator etc. This was not always the case and delayed the moderation process somewhat as a result.

Overall performance was improved. Centres had used the information in the Chief Examiner's Report and from the INSET events and had, in the main, had better choice of businesses.

Annotation of the work varied from fully indicating where criteria had been met to virtually nothing except for a final mark. Annotation is best indicated via the Mark Band achieved and the area of the spec met so, eg MB1a indicates area/theme/strand (a) has met Mark Band 1; MB2b indicates that (b) has met Mark Band 2 and so on rather than trying to annotate via the Assessment Objectives (AO's).

One major concern is still the inaccessibility of many of the portfolios with work either tightly packed into plastic wallets, in ring binders or clipped into plastic folders (this simply makes the process of extracting the work more laborious than should be the case). The preferred format is loose-leaf, treasury-tagged sheets that can be easily opened and read.

General Issues with the Specification:

Areas of the Specification:

The choice of activity for the company is vital to the success of the candidate in this unit. Other factors that have major impact upon success are the size of the group and the length of time that the business exists.
The activity must be big enough to enable candidates to have a significant role within the company. The size of group must not be too large otherwise candidates cannot make a significant contribution and in such cases they score very poorly on stands A & C.

The company should exist over a period of time to enable adequate planning operation and winding up of the company. Those businesses that were set up for a period of four weeks or less generally did not provide sufficient evidence for candidates.

The majority of the centres used Young Enterprise as a vehicle for this unit.

The following issues were evident:

Strand A: Some candidates kept detailed records in diaries/ journals and these were the centres that did best on this unit. Some centres failed to enter diaries as part of the evidence. Much of the evidence for candidate involvement comes from the diaries. Diaries also showed timelines and made activities clear. They supported the other three strands. Some candidates found it difficult to discuss what they did and tended to use “we”. Such evidence needed witness statements to support their diaries. Working dairies should form part of the evidence and these do provide a good evidence base for other strands as well as for strand A.

Photographic evidence was included in a small number of entries. This proved useful and supported the group presentation.

Personal evaluations were often weak, one sided and lacked examples.

Issues arose in the quality of some portfolios because some centres failed to ensure that the product/ service of the company involved sufficient activity to allow all candidates to have an active input enabling them to move out of mark band 1.

Strand B: Some centres produced excellent work for this strand with clear descriptions of roles and responsibilities as well as supported evaluations of team members in these roles. Other centres failed to produce either the descriptions or the evaluations. Evaluations were often one sided and unsupported. There were few fully supported evaluations seen.

Strand C: The witness statements for the presentation were often brief and needed much greater detail. The poor quality of witness statements was a major cause of the lenient assessment. Candidates may have made substantial contribution to the company, report and presentation but unless there is clear evidence from witness statements detailing this then moderators cannot agree marks awarded. Candidates also should include their own PowerPoint printouts, cue cards, etc. The centre must also ensure that a full copy of the group presentation is sent for moderation to enable individual input to be gauged. The centres should not restrict themselves to the one side of the exemplar witness statement proforma found in the qualification guidance and on the Edexcel website. This is only a guide and centres must ensure that they make full and clear statements about candidate input into the company and the presentation.

Strand D: This strand needs the financial outcomes of the company to be used to enable effective evaluations. This did not always happen. Some centres did not direct candidates to cover this strand as a separate task and relied upon descriptions of activities and the personal evaluations and the evaluations of the other team members to be the evaluation of the company.

6924: Managing and Developing People
January 2007

Moderation Process

The external moderation process was deemed to be straightforward.
Overall centres forwarded samples on time and an accurate number of sample portfolios were provided i.e. ten portfolios with the highest and lowest grade included.

Statements of authentication were present in the samples moderated for this series. However these were often not signed by either the student or the assessor. Centres should ensure authentication statements are fully completed when submitting evidence for external moderation.

Assessment Objectives and Mark Band Evidence

In general it was felt that the lack of research for this unit and the choice of organisation often limited candidates in accessing the higher mark bands.

Strand A

This strand was evidenced well, in terms of motivational strategies and the strengths & weaknesses of motivational techniques. There was some evidence of alternative approaches. Lack of research of conflicts between the individual and the organisation often prevented candidates from accessing higher mark bands. However, clear links were made to recognised theorist.

Strand B

The choice of activity often limited candidates in fully developing evidence requirements for higher mark bands. The assessment evidence requirements for this strand consists of an evaluation of a group activity, focused on planning an event or developing and implementing a new system or procedure.

The meeting element of this strand was often limited in the evidence submitted. Learners are required to submit a report on one meeting related to the activity. Reason for holding the meeting and advantages and disadvantages were often generic and not applied to the team activity. Evidence for mark band three requires the learner to suggest alternative methods of the planned outcome this was often limited.

The team-working element of this strand was well referenced to a team or motivational theorist. However there was limited application of benefits and drawbacks of team working. There was limited evidence of individual's objectives and needs are different from those of a team.

The second element of this strand focuses on leadership styles, although there was detailed theory included in most portfolios. There was insufficient application and evaluation of management style in relation to the team activity. Alternative leadership styles were addressed but the evidence was often fragmented as three or four alternative leadership styles were suggested.

Strand C
For this strand learners tended to submit evidence of generic training offered by the chosen organisation or focused on training that the learner had participated in. Both approaches provided limited scope for development and evaluation towards the higher mark bands.

Strand D
For this strand learners are required to produce a personal development plan. One of the key issues of the personal development plan was lack of research for higher and further education routes and career routes.

Evidence of common formats for skills audit was limited; learners often included study skills audits and should be encouraged to include a work related skills audit.

Centre Guidance

Strand A & C
Learners should be encouraged to use the same organisation to investigate motivation strategies and training for strand A and C. Relevant primary and secondary research should be carried out to match the evidence requirements of each strand and mark band. Learners should be encouraged to select appropriate organisations and refer to the performance descriptors on page 187 of the speciation.

Strand B
Evidence of one meeting should be included as an appendix. Evidence of submitted for the meeting should be applied to the team activity. Centres should encourage learners to select a team activity focused on planning an event or developing and implementing a new system or procedure.

Strand D
Research for personal development should include further/higher education and career routes. Learners should be encouraged to use the research to develop the analysis and evaluation requirements for the higher mark bands.

Evidence of common formats for skills audit should be researched, this should include study skills audit and work related skills audit. Both skills audits should then be used to develop analysis and evaluation requirements for higher mark bands.

Assessment

Annotation of evidence achievement by assessor(s) was limited. Centres sampled in this series were found to be lenient in the assessment of portfolio evidence for this unit.

Grade Boundaries

At the E/U boundary learners demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of key concepts of managing and developing people. At this grade boundary, candidates presented limited evidence of application, analysis and evaluation.

For strand A learners showed a basic understanding of motivational strategies, used in the chosen organisation, this was further developed by identifying strengths and weaknesses of the motivational techniques. Suggestions for alternative approaches were identified. Evidence of conflict was limited as learners often focused on conflict between individuals and not individuals and the organisation. Appropriate links were made to recognised theorists. Evidence of research was implied/limited at this grade boundary. For strand B basic/limited application of knowledge and understanding was demonstrated for team working and management styles. However, clear references were made to recognised theorists. Evidence of a meeting was limited. Strand C evidence of research for a training programme for one individual within the organisation was implicit /limited at this grade boundary. Strand D Basic reason for carrying out a skills audit was appropriate for this grade boundary. Evidence of research of common formats of skills audit and careers were often limited.

At the A/B boundary candidates were able to demonstrate in depth knowledge and understanding of key concepts of managing and developing people. Evidence was supported by good research, clear application, analysis and evaluation. For strand A candidates demonstrated good knowledge and motivational strategies, used in the chosen organisation, this was then further developed by identifying strengths and weaknesses of the motivational techniques. Suggestions for alternative approaches and conflicts were addressed; appropriate links were made to recognised theorists. Analysis and evaluation was effective for this strand. For Strand B learners' demonstrated clear application of knowledge and understanding of team working and management styles, clear references were made to recognised theorists. Stronger evidence and analysis of a meeting was included in portfolios at this grade boundary, together with better evaluation of conflicts. For Strand C learners evidenced relevant up to date research to demonstrate the effectiveness of a training programme for an individual within the chosen organisation. Stronger evaluation of the cost and benefits to the organisation and the strengths and weakness of the training programme was included at this grade boundary. For Strand D at this grade boundary, candidates were able to apply research to their chosen career/development plan with stronger evaluation of alternative career routes.

6925: Marketing Decisions
January 2007

This is the first time this paper has been sat. It has followed the basic approach taken by the sample paper with a single main scenario on which a number of questions were focused, and which accounted for 70 out of the 90 available marks. The remaining 20 marks related to two main topics that were to be answered from candidates' own study of specific businesses. This will continue to be the basic format of the paper in the future.

The scenario of coffee shop outlets caused no obvious problems for candidates and some candidates used their own knowledge of this market to support their answers. Many candidates attempted to give theoretical answers to some questions without considering the context in which the question and scenario had been set. All questions in this paper are set in a specific context and it is the application of knowledge and understanding that is essentially being tested in addition to analysis and reasoning.

Questions 7 & 8, which were based on businesses the candidates had studied during their course, were reasonably well answered, but did highlight two concerns. The first, emphasised below, is that many candidates simply did not know the terminologies or did not read the questions carefully enough. The second is that the questions expect that candidates have actually studied specific businesses with specific topics in mind. It was clear that a significant number of candidates did not know sufficient actually details about the business to allow them to explain how and why it operated in the way that it did. It was also clear that candidates were putting down the answers to Part (a) without checking if they could still use that business to answer the other parts of the question. A few, however did realise the problem and changed the business.

Unfortunately, there were some common causes of candidates' failure to score marks.

Candidates did not read scenarios and questions carefully enough. This caused some candidates to answer questions that had not been asked, or to answer only parts of questions. Often very simple words were misread or ignored, as with '…for this purpose' in Q5.

Time was clearly an issue for some candidates but, where that did happen, it tended to be Q8 and even Q7 that were not answered. Both of those questions had fairly easy opportunities to pick up marks and it is recommended that candidates look through the whole paper before they start answering it. It should also be noted that many candidates started by writing out very large parts of the question before they started to actually answer it. That not only wasted time but it also used up space and some candidates still only write to the space provided and then stop.

Some of the basic terminologies are not known. This includes terms specifically referred to in the syllabus content such as media mix and quota sampling. There was also a great deal of confusion in many candidates' minds as to what the various pricing policies actually mean and how they are used. Some tools of analysis are also poorly understood and it was very disappointing to see how few candidates could draw a product life cycle or interpret the correct meaning of the Boston Matrix.

Details of the performance of individual questions.

1(a) – Most candidates scored well on this question, many gaining full marks. There were two main reasons why some candidates failed to gain full marks. First, some candidates correctly identified a SWOT element from the scenario but then did not go on to explain why it was a strength, weakness, etc., for Caffè Bologna. Sometimes the only explanation was that they were internal or external. Second, some candidates were confused and to what were weaknesses and what were threats.

1(b) – Again most candidates could identify a suitable piece of additional information and the details that would be provided. Less went on to justify its need, as the question asked for. Some candidates failed to score any marks for this question because the information did not relate to threats, general strategies were suggested, such as carrying out a PEST analysis, but no specific piece of information was identified, more than one pieces of information was identified rather than justifying why the **one** piece would be needed.

2(a) – Most candidates did know what strategic marketing decisions involved and usually expressed this in terms of them relating to the long term. Many candidates also went on to point out that tactical decisions were short term, although, without some elaboration, that would not gain a mark. What was generally missing in the answers was any application to Caffè Bologna's decision to open up new coffee bars. This needed candidates to explain why opening up new outlets would be long term, or why this would involve the whole of the business, etc.

2(b) – Most candidates gave two valid tactical decisions, although some decided to give three, or more. Many candidates also developed their answers to put this in the context of dealing with the threat of direct competition for Caffè Bologna's existing outlets. Where candidates failed to score more than 2 marks it was usually because the context was not referred to. Please note the comments on pricing policies given at the start of Q8.

3(a) –This is an Applied Business paper, and it is dealing with specific business situations. Candidates are being put in the position of dealing with the challenge of analysing a particular situation, ready for explained and/or justified marketing decisions. The product life cycle is one of the basic, and probably simplest, tools of analysis for students to understand, and yet the majority of candidates were unable to apply it.

The vertical axis requires some sort of accurate definition. Many candidates did not specify what it was at all. Other candidates labelled it as 'growth' and some candidates decided that this was the axis on which the years should be put (making it almost impossible to score any marks).

The question asked for a fully labelled product life cycle, but, in addition to the points made above, candidates did not give the horizontal axis any title, and ignored any scale on the horizontal axis. 'Fully labelled' will expect accurate labelling.

Some candidates simply wanted to produce a typical product life cycle and so included saturation and decline. The instructions were to refer to the data in the scenario which has no indication of anything other than a move towards maturity. Not appreciating the data had the consequence that the shape of the curve would be wrong, the labelling of the sections would not match the dates, and often the only mark that could be awarded was for drawing the growth period at roughly the right time.

Candidates need to be given situations in which the product life cycles are not typical, as with the launch of the Nintendo Wii in preparation for this paper.

3(b) – Generally candidates did provide appropriate changes of tactics. At A2 level this was not simply expecting candidates to run through the elements of the marketing mix (4, 5, 7 or more) but to put them into context, 'ensuring the growth stage' and to explain how the chosen changes or tactics would achieve this. The context was ensuring the growth stage in a competitive market and only the best candidates appreciated this. Please note the comments on pricing policies given at the start of Q8.

4(a) – As with the product life cycle it was disappointing to find so many candidates who did not understand the basic meaning of the Boston Matrix and therefore placed Caffè Bologna in either problem child or star. The problem with both of these was that they required a valid explanation of why there was high market growth. A common misunderstanding of the matrix was to confuse market growth with the growth of Caffè Bologna itself. It might still have been possible to argue for problem child if a good case had been given for an 8.9% growth rate being high, but the scenario actually said that growth had 'slowed considerably'.

The question supposed that candidates would deal with Caffè Bologna's position in the UK luxury coffee shop market, so dog was the expected answer. However, some candidates referred to the more local market, in which case cash cow was a possible answer although the justifications for this position were usually weak.

4(b) – Some candidates had a good understanding of the term micro marketing environment, but many candidates seemed to assume that the micro element related to the size of the business rather than to the market conditions, although the two are closely related. This required an understanding of the marketing environment in which Caffè Bologna exists and of the marketing decision making that would create for the firm. Many candidates did refer to small scale but then gave limited explanation of the marketing environment and Caffè Bologna's part in this.

4(c) – The majority of candidates ignored the term 'media mix' altogether and frequently referred to just advertising, or even to the whole marketing mix. Those who did understand the term could usually give an appropriate change, but there was limited development of answers to give any explanation of the change.

5(a) – There were some well developed answers for this question which should have been very straight forward. Some candidates did not knowing the difference between primary and secondary research. Candidates sometimes ignored the purpose of the research which was to find out about Caffè Bologna's competitors. A few candidates simply wrote about the benefits and drawbacks of primary and secondary research with no reference to the context at all.

6(a) – Again there were some very good answers from candidates who read the question carefully and noted both the table and the stem. However, many candidates ignored the instruction to ‘evaluate’ which implied that there were two sides to this, and some candidates did not answer the question with any specific reference to ‘creating a typical customer profile’. The problem of the layout of the columns was spotted by very few candidates and some clearly assumed that 52 of the women earned between £10,000 and £20,000, were part-time workers who visited twice a week. There were also a few candidate who though the income rows related to age. Analysis of data will be an important part of this paper and it is vital that students understand the basic ways of displaying marketing data.

6(b) – The intention in this question was that candidate would consider whether or not a meaningful quota sample could be created from the data in Table 1 that could then be used to sample customers at other times of day. Candidates also interpreted the question, with some justification, as asking them if the data on Table 1 could be taken as though it was a quota sample and used to consider the profile at other times of day. Both approaches were accepted, but despite that very few candidates scored many marks.

Most candidates did not seem to know what a quota sample was and only dealt with the last part of the question, considering how the profile might change through the day. That of course was what part (c) was asking.

6(c) – Many candidates were able to score full marks here, but others failed to score any marks because they did not read the question carefully enough. This question asked for a change in the profile of the customers and some candidates only referred to the total numbers. Some candidates ignored the instruction to deal with just one change and listed many changes rather than providing any explanation of the changes.

7 – This whole question was about diversified markets and most candidates appreciated that. There were a few candidates who approached this in terms of diversified products that were actually being aimed at the same market. For this question section (b) was particularly challenging and candidates should have checked what all parts of the question expected before they chose their business.

7(a) – This was generally well answered except for where candidates had markets that were too similar, or where the products were very similar and there was no explanation in (a) or (b) as to why the markets would be different. Candidates were asked to give the product and the market. Usually that was obvious as with food and clothes for M&S, but, where it was not, candidates should have provided additional details.

7(b) – This question was designed to be challenging. Candidates failed to score marks because no differences in the marketing mix were given so it was impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of them. A significant number of candidates gave fairly detailed information about the marketing mix for one of the markets and wrote nothing about the other market. Many candidates clearly did not know what the actual marketing mix was for the two markets and simply supposed what they might be. This part of the paper expects study of real businesses and the use of real facts about them to support what is being written. Where marketing mixes were referred to there were often no difference in them and this was acknowledged by the candidates as with Ipods and computers both being advertised on television and magazines and both being sold in the same retail outlets or via the internet.

7(c) – Many candidates scored one mark for stating the objective as expansion or re-enforcing branding, but only the better candidates went on to explain why this was being achieved because of being in two markets. Some more obscure objectives were valid but they needed good explanations. Weaker candidates simply gave the objectives or increased profit or more market share with no particular reference to being in diversified markets.

8 – There were some very good answers for this question, but for many candidates they simply did not know what the various pricing strategies terms mean. This confusion was also demonstrated in Q2(b) and Q3(b) where totally inappropriate strategies were being suggested in terms of both the wrong name being used and in terms of what the policy would actually do to the market. For example, penetration pricing was used in Q3(b), with no recognition that this is an entry strategy and that Costa is already established in the market. Predatory pricing was used in Q2(a), which is inappropriate on two counts. First, Caffè Bologna would be unable to implement it against a major chain such as Costa or Starbucks. Second, this is essentially illegal in the UK and therefore not an appropriate tactical decision to 'advise Caffè Bologna' to take.

There is a very obvious confusion in many candidates' minds between skimming and penetration pricing that needs to be addressed. Markers for Q8 were instructed to take whatever policy had actually been used in 8(a) and use that for marking parts (b) and (c). In some questions that may not be possible and candidates are in danger of losing a significant proportion of their marks simply because they do not know nor understand what is a very basic term.

There was also confusion in some candidates' minds between skimming and premium pricing. The first is an entry strategy and will eventually include a fall in price. The second is used because the product is superior and will remain demanded at the higher price, so there is no price fall.

8(a) – Many candidates selected the wrong product where skimming was not actually used. Where the term was understood candidates nearly always gained the full 3 marks.

8(b) – Most candidates could score some marks here because of the generous approach taken for marking this part. Full marks were rare because only very basic explanations were provided by all but the best candidates.

8(c) – The better candidates scored fairly well here, but there was also a great deal of confusion about what a downturn in the economy meant. Some candidates assumed that this meant increased taxes, increased interest rates and even an increase in the value of the pound. There were also candidates who recognised that customers might have less disposable income but then seemed to feel that the appropriate reaction of the business should be to put prices up. This part of PESTLE needs more study on the part of the students.

Future Development

1. **Use of past papers** – An important part of the preparation for examination is to look at past papers. This paper and the mark scheme should be taken as the template for future papers. At the same time, however, it must be recognised that over time all parts of the syllabus will be tested.

2. **Writing full answers** – In some cases candidates did not fully answer the questions. There were four main reasons for this, which need to be addressed:

(a) Candidates must respond to the layout of the questions and the number of marks allocated to each question. These will indicate the length and detail expected in the answer.

(b) Candidates must understanding the requirements of trigger words such as, state, explain, justify and evaluate as these indicate both the expected nature of the answers but also the expected depth and detail required.

(c) Candidates also need to respond exactly to the question that was asked and ensure that they have included answers to all parts of it.

(d) Candidates must not simply write to the space provided. If they have not completed the answer in full they should continue on a separate sheet of paper or elsewhere in the answer booklet. Also note the final comment below.

3. **Application** – This is an applied business course and all questions are set within a specific business context. The general rule is that a significant part of the marks will be awarded for applying the theory to the given situation. It is therefore very important that candidates think about, and analyse, the situations and write their answers with reference to the given situations.

4. **Terminologies and tools of analysis** – Questions will be asked that assume that candidates has a basic knowledge and understanding of all terms and analytical techniques used in the specification. These may attract a significant number of marks and candidates will be potentially seriously disadvantaged if they do not know the terminologies and how the tools of analysis are used.

5. **The last two questions** – These questions relate to real businesses that students have studied during their course. There are of course a huge number of potential businesses that could be studied, many of which may not be known to the examiners who are marking the papers. In general, in future, these questions will be set in such a way that candidates will be required to give sufficient details that the examiners can identify all of the features that will tell them about the business, or product, and allow them to mark the answers effectively and accurately.

In some cases this will be achieved by asking candidates to only select major UK businesses or products. In other cases candidates will be asked to provide clear details of the product or business. In all cases real businesses must be used and these should be readily identifiable to the examiner. The advice to centres is that for all topics major businesses and product are studied as part of the course. There is a great deal of information about major businesses and their promotions and policies available to centres. Studying smaller local businesses may be acceptable but candidates need to be prepared to give clear sufficient details in their answers that will clearly identify the businesses, the products and the strategies.

6. **Indicating that answers have been continued outside of the space provided** – Where candidates have used additional sheets these scripts are sent to markers for traditional marking. In many cases the only evidence that extra pages had been used was the fact that they were attached. The writing on the examination paper itself for specific questions often ended with a full sentence and no comment to say that the answer was continued elsewhere. Candidates must indicate very clearly that an answer is being continued, and preferable provide clear details of where.

6926: Impact of Finance on Business Decisions
January 2007

Administration

Most centres submitted portfolios on time. Administration was generally good. Annotation of the work, though generally clear and appropriate, varied from indicating fully where criteria had been met, to being very limited with little more than the final mark. Annotation is best indicated via the Mark Band achieved and the area of the spec met so, e.g. MB1a indicates area (a) has met Mark Band 1, rather than trying to annotate via the Assessment Objectives (AOs). Authentication signatures accompanied the samples. In general, marks on the work conformed to those on the OPTEMS

There was some evidence of standardisation where more than one assessor was involved in judging candidates' work.

General comments

This is the first series for this unit, being the first window in which centres could enter candidates. Approaches varied from the largely “academic” - e.g. candidates producing masses of theory on sources of finance or investment appraisal - to the more appropriate “applied” approach. In the latter case, the assessment requirement was met in a practical way through, for example, a suitable choice of business and its accompanying financial information. In the cases of the best work an integrated or holistic approach was apparent, with the candidate demonstrating clear understanding that aspects of the four themes have potential links.

Areas of the Specification

Theme (a). Some candidates selected PLCs - although not all used the available financial information - and others selected businesses (typically sole traders) where financial information was not available. The items moderated suggested that candidates who used actual financial information produced better quality of work, especially where differences and trends with these figures were explored over time. Classification into internal and external sources is a suitable basis for analysis but was not always used.

Theme (b). Candidates' work was more focused and financial information was readily available and used. Stronger work had the following features: (i) it acknowledged and used the type of business under review (with reference to, for example, products, market and industrial sector), (ii) calculated additional ratios other than current and acid test, and (iii) produced detailed conclusions rather than simple statements.

Themes (c) and (d). There is evidence that a number of centres extracted and used the Teacher's Guide illustrative material for one or both these themes. Although there is no penalty for this approach in the January and June 2007 series - other than the penalty of using some information that is out-of-date, and other information that is fully developed or expanded - be the most suitable for candidates - it should not be used in future years. Reasons for this include: the Teacher's Guide is in the public domain (on the Edexcel website) and contains analytical and other comments that are readily available to students, thus potentially negating the work as their own; the quality of a simulated or fictionalised company that is used determines candidates' ability to access marks in the MB3 range, and the simulations used are not as fully developed as they could be, and contain dated information (eg, the interest rates in (d)). Accepting the comment made in the guidance to the Unit that strand (d) can be assessed through the use of fictionalised or simulated material (which certainly applies to strand (c)), it may be more appropriate for candidates to apply their knowledge to real financial information from a real company. Centres are therefore requested to create (for (c)) their own simulation, which could of course use the Teacher's Guide as a foundation. If a simulation must be used for (d), it should be based on real company financial and other (eg market) information that has been fictionalised.

Centres using their own simulation for theme (c) wrote an appropriate scenario that gave candidates the opportunity to use the three main methods of investment appraisal. Sensitivity analysis is a suitable area for consideration but was not always present, and evidence of conflicts and problems was limited. Stronger pieces of work calculated and analysed IRR as well as DCF/NPV. Theme (d) can be approached from the point of view of either a private individual investor, or a corporate investor. Both approaches are suitable and were evidenced in candidates' work. The stronger coursework tended to group and consider ratios under appropriate headings (profitability, liquidity, efficiency and investment), which appeared to aid candidates in analysing and drawing conclusions.

6927: International Dimemsions Of Business
January 2007

To successfully achieve this unit, learners need to demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding and application of knowledge across the full range and scope of the unit outcomes, in particular the unit assessment outcomes/criteria, the specific AO's, and the mark band (MB) distributions (Applied Business Awards Specifications Pages 109 to 114). In as much as learners need to show a clear understanding of the subject and the practical application of the unit requirements from a balanced contribution across the four knowledge/applications Strands, the related AO's and marking criteria bands.

Therefore, in relation to the Unit specifications (p109 and 110) learners should:

- Explain the impact and opportunities created for businesses in international context.
- Present relevant and up-to-date information, from a range of sources, on the factors influencing the establishment of an international presence.
- Perform an investigation into the chosen (international) businesses.
- Identify the advantages and disadvantages in the growth potential for a business supported by international organisations (WTO etc).

- Prioritise evidence and show judgement in the selection and presentation of findings
- Present exemplar material appropriate to support their conclusions
- Explain the strengths and weaknesses in all aspects of creating/developing a presence as offered to a business within an international context.
- Examine the opportunities and challenged offered by global business
- Explore and present conclusions and outcomes, reflecting the positive and negative aspects for Host countries, international organisations and businesses operating in an international environment.

In particular, the work sampled indicated two businesses were identified for strand (a), the appropriateness of the business selected is significant for the potential achievement of the higher band. The businesses should be of a different nature and spread of international/global coverage (EU and Global is suggested in the unit specification) this should provide adequate variety for a comparison and variations in the way they address there business objectives for an international presences.

Evidence of independent research into the influencing factors were present, however, the depth of research on the factors that influence a business in creating an international presence is critical in terms of the volume, quality and appropriateness of material evidence and examples gathered and used. Basic descriptive analysis is implied for MB1, however, for MB2 and MB3, more detailed research process and outcomes are required within strand (b).

The key impact factors that an International Organisation (IO) can have on a business were covered, although generically rather than in relation to the business of choice, this is appropriate for MB1/2 (c), however for MB3 candidates need to show clearly the link between the host nation IOs and the business used as an example, to further explain and evaluate the full extent of the IO's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that impact on the business.

Candidates demonstrated a general understand of the issues relating to the growth in Global/Multi National Corporations(MNC), in terms of GDP and consumer impact, further consideration of the wider socio-economic and environmental aspects on the Host country could have been included, to underpin a critical appraisal and potential justification for MNC activity as require for MB3.

Authentication

Centres should include evidence to confirm originality of leaner work, the counter signature of the Assessment Marking Forms by tutors is critical in this process. Where appropriate witness statement, tutor comments, observation checklist could be used to support the authenticity of presented material.

Standardisation

Consistent marking and standardisation within centres was evident however in assessing higher performance, assessors need to consider the depth and scope of material in terms of quality of examples and quality and reasoning of evaluation in the learner's work to award the higher MB3 marks.

Enhancing Assessment

It would be of value to encourage candidates to select the chosen business for strand (b) from those used in strand (a), this would provide a base for material research, and be supplemental to that collected for stand (a).
Centres should ensure, when assessing especially in relation to the higher mark bands across all stands that clear evidence of explanation, critique and analysis of how/why the two businesses would consider and/or have a global activity, with good examples to support the MB2/MB3 marks.

For Strand (c) more detailed analysis and consideration of a wider range of influences, from a business and International Organisation perspectives, as indicated in the Unit specifications. The awarding of the MB3 marks is critically linked to candidate articulation of the selection, evaluation and the relevance of the selected exemplars.

Within Strand (d), candidates should consider looking beyond the financial and consumer/customer impact, to the wider socio-economic, suppliers, distribution and environmental aspects on the Host country, this approach is required to underpin a critical appraisal and potential justification for MNC activity as require for MB3.

6928: Organising an event
January 2007.

Administration:

The majority of centres sent in their portfolios within the correct timeframe and to the correct moderator/ address. A small number did go to Edexcel. A small number of centres did not include any identification information.

Mark sheets were not present on all samples, some centres had designed their own and did not use the Edexcel format. Some centres who did not complete mark sheets listed the marks per theme on the candidates' work.

Few centres provided evidence of internal verification/ standardisation. There was little, if any, evidence of standardisation however, in a number of centres only one assessor was evident.

Authentication signatures were missing, either staff or candidate, in a significant number of portfolios and moderators had to contact centres and chase up for these.

Where centres design their own "front sheets" it is important to ensure that all the relevant information is present i.e. candidate and centre name and number, centre marks, moderator marks, assessor's and candidate's signatures, signature of internal moderator etc. This was not always the case and delayed the moderation process somewhat as a result.

This was the first series in which this unit had been moderated. There were a number of issues that impacted upon the performance of candidates in this unit. These are given below.

Annotation of the work varied from fully indicating where criteria had been met to virtually nothing except for a final mark. Annotation is best indicated via the Mark Band achieved and the area of the spec met so, eg MB1a indicates area/theme/strand (a) has met Mark Band 1; MB2b indicates that (b) has met Mark Band 2 and so on rather than trying to annotate via the Assessment Objectives (AO's).

One major concern is still the inaccessibility of many of the portfolios with work either tightly packed into plastic wallets, in ring binders or clipped into plastic folders (this simply makes the process of extracting the work more laborious than should be the case). The preferred format is loose-leaf, treasury-tagged sheets that can be easily opened and read.

General Issues with the Specification:

Areas of the Specification:
There were a number of issues that impacted upon the performance of this unit:

Strand (a): Events were sometimes determined by the centre and/ or past activities of the year group rather than by the "team". This reduced the quality of the evidence presented for this theme. Candidates often failed to carry out primary & secondary research

Strand (b): Some centres provided the team with a risk assessment carried out by the centre's staff; these could not be credited to the candidates. Candidates often included time lines, critical path analysis and/ or Gantt chart but failed to explain their use, purpose or to analyse them in relation to the activity/ event.

Many candidates did not produce contingency plans. They also did not understand constraints or how to deal with them. Insurance, whether desirable or essential, was rarely considered.

Strand (c): The witness statements for the event were often brief and needed much greater detail. The poor quality of witness statements was a major cause of the lenient assessment. Candidates may have made substantial contribution to the planning and carrying out of the event, but unless there is clear evidence from witness statements detailing this then moderators cannot agree marks awarded. Evaluations were often unsupported with little evidence presented to justify conclusions.

Strand (d): There was little evaluation, and few conclusions and recommendations were made. There were few links made to the research carried out in strand (a).

Candidates often carried out successful events however these were not well documented, reported or had quality witness statements written about their individual inputs.

6929: External Influences on Business
January 2007

To successfully achieve this unit, learners need to demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding and application of knowledge across the full range and scope of the unit outcomes, in particular the unit assessment outcomes/criteria, the specific AO's, and the mark band (MB) distributions (Applied Business Awards Specifications Pages 131 to 134). In as much as learners need to show a clear understanding of the subject and the practical application of the unit requirements from a balanced contribution across the four knowledge/applications Strands, the related AO's and marking criteria bands.

Therefore, in relation to the Unit specifications (p131 and 132) learners should:

- Provide clear coverage of the four issues influences on a business, with suitable exemplar material to support the discussion.
- Include relevant and up-to-date information, from a suitable range of sources and examples with appropriate materials presented in support of the final issue conclusions
- Use appropriate techniques and methods on the collection of information and analysis, showing awareness of the selection and relevance of information, issues, problems or opportunities.
- Explain the positive and negative aspects of the key issues on a business.
- Show judgement in the selection and appropriate presentation of the findings in a suitable format.
- Evaluate the business external issues, the business influences and the wider organisational context, thus beings aware of the issues, problems and/or opportunities

In particular, the work sampled indicated the majority of cases a variety of Chair's report were produced, although no specific structure is presented within the unit, it is suggested candidates present their findings in a form of either :-

A Chairman's statement, similar that which a company chair would present in the annual published accounts for a Company/business, with a supplementary document that explains and highlighting the external issue that the company may/is facing over the next years.

or
2. A Chairman's report which is in effect a scripted presentation of the full issues etc, as would be presented at an Annual General Meeting, including the supportive material for that company.

This should primarily be from the view point of the Chairman looking out of the business into the wider world and assessing the immediate/short term impact/influence of the issues.

Given, that the unit has four prescribes issues to address, the strands are focussed specifically towards the overall award balance of AOs and performance descriptors as required at A2 level, therefore within each strand the four external influences are repeatedly addressed from each individual AO perspective. In most cases this was addressed, however, the influences received variable treatment as to the depth of knowledge, research and evaluation applied to each.

The business selected is important for the candidates to research and explore the external impacts associated with that business, coupled with need for depth of researched material across all four influence areas, are critical for strand (D).

There were imbalanced on the depth treatment between each influence, with the Technological and to some extent the Environment influence being normally less well covered. Thus the application required for MB2/3 was limited as was the justification and/or consideration of the businesses as required for (d) MB3.

Candidates demonstrated a generally good understand of the overall external factors , with substantial amount of research data generated in some cases, however, this material needs to be filtered, evaluated and used as appropriate to the business and influence under discussion, thus enhancing the overall quality of the report as required for MB2/3 in strands (b) and (C).

Authentication

Centres should include evidence to confirm originality of leaner work, the counter signature of the Assessment Marking Forms by tutors is critical in this process. Where appropriate witness statement, tutor comments, observation checklist could be used to support the authenticity of presented material.

Standardisation

Consistent marking and standardisation within centres was evident however in assessing higher performance, assessors need to consider the depth and scope of material in terms of quality of examples and quality and reasoning of evaluation in the learner's work to award the higher MB3 marks.

Enhancing Assessment

An appropriate Chair's report must be produced, although no specific structure is suggested, it would be advisable for candidates to present their findings in a form, similar that which are outlined above. In addition candidates should be encouraged to select a business which is of sufficient size, structure and product and/or service range to allow all four influences to be examined to an appropriate depth.

Centres should encourage fuller/wider consideration of the range, value, up to date and appropriateness of the information being used and being applied across each of the influence, to ensure equality of treatment as to the depth of knowledge, research and evaluation. It was evident from the sample, technological and to some extent the environment influence were being normally less well covered or primarily from a theoretical/generic perspective within strand (a) and not fully relevant/applied in strand (b).

The business selected is important for the candidates to research and explore the external impacts associated with and relevant to that business, beyond the theoretical and business generic. This depth of researched material across all four influence areas is critical for strand (D).

Substantial amount of research data is being generated, this material needs to be filtered and evaluated for appropriateness to the business of choice and the influence under discussion, this will enhance the quality of the documentation and ensure fuller consideration of the range, value, up to date and appropriateness of the information presented for each influence, especially for Mb3.

For stand (d) clear justifications for the judgements made about the impacts of each of the four influences is required, considering the wider business context, beyond descriptive/generic statements about the four influences, to include a more explanatory and evaluatory narrative.

Statistics

Applied GCE Business Grade Boundaries

6916	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw	90	58	51	45	39	33
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6917	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6918	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6919	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	49	43	37	32	27
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6920	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	90	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6921	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	90	55	49	43	37	31
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6922	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	49	48	41	35	29
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6924	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6925	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	90	55	49	43	37	32
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6926	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6927	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6928	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6929	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	49	43	37	31	25
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40

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