Examiners' Report

Summer 2007

GCE

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

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General Comments

The structure of the question paper was based on replicating Assessment Objective (AO) and Mark Band (MB) weightings established in previous papers and in line with standard set by Specimen Paper. In this way the requirements of the question paper should be directly comparable with previous years.

It is recommended that in addition to reading and taking any notes or advice from this report, that Examiner Reports for previous series are read as they contain lots of general advice that is still relevant and likely to be useful for staff and students in preparation for future papers.

My own general observations about this paper are as follows:

Many candidates do not seem to be familiar with the command words being used throughout the paper. They may have a basic, general usage understanding of the words, but do not understand the precise way that the command words are used in at the start of a question. This is crucial as the mark allocation is usually based on this precise use rather than a more general usage. This can sometimes result in marks being lost through lack of precision in the interpretation and use of command word rather than lack of subject knowledge (or application).

Two suggestions for ways of addressing this issue are:

1) Check out Appendix 8, in the Teacher's Guide that accompanies the Edexcel AS GCE and GCE specifications for Applied Business, May 2005. This gives an induction session is to introduce students to some of the command words that they will commonly see within the GCE assessment.

2) Use past papers and Markschemes to identify how command words relate to mark allocation and exemplar answers.

Candidates are also missing some of the precise wording and information given in the stem of the questions. This may be simply through misreading, not a problem exclusive to this paper, or it could be that words become invisible to candidates who want to get down as much as they know about a subject in the heat of the exam room. Again, marks may be lost through the candidate missing the odd word that defines a precise requirement within the question/answer during their scan/reading of the question.

To help overcome this problem, advise candidates to read each question thoroughly before starting to write their answer; then to read back their answer and to check that this meets the wording/requirement of the question – if not, they have an opportunity to correct or re-write an answer.

The open nature of the last two items in each question, based on candidate's own choice of business or area of study, clearly works well for some candidates. However, for weaker candidates it can result in a page of generalisations or no marks at all is they fail to spot the key words that define each question. When asked to write about how ownership affects control in the business they have named, the subject of the answer is sometimes switched to something that the candidate knows about which may or may not relate to ownership and control. No marks are gained for not answering the question asked.

There were a number of candidates who chose inappropriate organisations or examples. It was very obvious that candidates who chose to use small, local, sole traders as their examples, produced much better answers than candidates who chose 'famous name' international businesses that have a high profile in public awareness terms but are somewhat opaque when it comes to analysis of their actual business operation. This is perhaps something to consider when using case studies during teaching, or when advising candidates on which business to study for their assignment work.

This report is designed to help future teaching and learning. It may come across as a critique of the ability of candidates, but it should not be interpreted as being unduly negative. Judging from the many papers and answers that I have seen, most candidates have indeed worked hard on their studies and the paper is just designed to give candidates the opportunity of demonstrating, within the terms of the Assessment Objectives for this Unit, just how much they have learned. I offer my congratulations to all students, whatever grade they may ultimately achieve.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1
A general point, many candidates do not seem to understand and recognise the difference between the aims of a business and the objectives that the business may have. Consequently, for some candidates, this first question became much more difficult that it was envisaged.

Question started with a scenario that described, briefly, three businesses located in the fictional town of Brancom:
• *Myron Daw*, *(MD)* an estate agent, established as a partnership.
• *Pets Protection Society (PPS)*, a charity that operates Animal Hospitals and retail shops throughout the UK.
• *Wood City Ltd. (WCL)*, a manufacturer of wooden buildings, such as sheds, a private limited company.
Candidates were given information about each business, its products and the general business situation in Brancom. Candidates were also given the stated aim of each business.

1a) Using the information provided, candidates were asked to give an example of one objective for each business that is suitable for its stated aim.

Objective for *MD*, many candidates were not differentiating between aims (given in scenario) and objectives as asked for in the question. Lots of generic business aims given, but few relevant objectives for this business.

Objective for *PPS*, better answers than for *MD*, possibly because candidates relate to or understand veterinary services better than estate agents. As with answers given for *MD*, some repetition of stated aims.

Objective for *WCL*, again, lots of repetition of given aims from scenario.

To help candidates in the future it is worth examining the specification for this unit which clearly differentiates between a business's aims and its objectives.

1b) candidates were provided with additional information about the way *MD* had been established as a partnership. It was explained that at its present stage of development, the two most important business functions in *MD* were Marketing and Finance.

In (i) candidates were asked to examine why these two business functions are likely to be regarded by the partners as being the most important. Lots of confused answers, with many candidates just writing a generic definition of each function. The need to answer why these two functions was 'most important' to the business was missed by a lot of candidates. Given answers produced little application, mainly theory. This type of question, asking candidates to 'examine' a given business situation, requires candidates to demonstrate some application to access all available marks.

In (ii) candidates were asked to show how two other business functions will work with each other to contribute to the success of *Myron Daw*. Despite the fact that 'two other' was emboldened to draw candidates' attention to this detail, this was another point that was missed by many candidates. Candidates found it difficult to resolve the concept of 'other business functions' in a business that had been established as a partnership of two people, perhaps assuming that a partnership only employed the two people who established the partnership originally. As a consequence, this question produced more generic answers, many not relevant to an estate agent e.g. 'production' in a manufacturing context. Lots of candidates gave one other plus one that had already been mentioned. Many answers failed to show any understanding of what is meant by a business function, the fourth bulleted point in the Specification section 1.1. Only better candidates accessed the third mark by showing how two business functions work together to contribute to the success of *MD*.

1c) Candidates were reminded that *MD* is owned as a partnership and that *WCL* is owned as a private limited company. They were then asked to outline how the different ownership of *MD* and *WCL* influences the financing of each business. The focus of this question is on the financing of each business – not about finance in general. This had to be understood before the question could be answered successfully. Also, the question is not just about the ownership, unless in the context of financing, and not just financing, unless in the context of ownership. The need to recognise the parameters of this question was important, but missed by candidates that rushed in and gave muddled generic descriptions based on anything they could remember about the financial aspects of business in general.

For 1d) the subject switched to *PPS*. Candidates were given details of how the charity operates, together with a list of some of the business functions and activities based at its head office. Candidates were then asked to explain the difference between a centralised and decentralised organisation structure, using the information given about *PPS* to support their answer. The term 'organisational structure' seemed to attract candidates' attention away from main focus of question i.e. centralised/decentralised organisations. As a result, many answers just described various organisational structure – tall, flat, matrix etc., rather than answering the question i.e. the differences between centralised and decentralised organisations. Judging by the answers produced, most candidates had only a basic understanding of these terms, but even this was lacking by the many candidates whose answers seemed to be just guesses, based on attempts to link centralised/decentralised to random bits of knowledge of business structures.

Answers to parts e) and f) of Question 1 were based on businesses that candidates had studied.

1e) Required candidates to name a business and to give its main activities, for context. They then had to state the ownership of your chosen business (e.g. private limited company, sole trader), then analyse how the ownership of the named business influences the way that it is controlled.

My initial perception was that candidates had little idea of the ownership of the businesses they named, just writing down a famous name and attributing it with whatever form of ownership they know about. As a consequence organisations like *Tesco* or *B&Q* were described variously as PLC's, private limited companies, and in some cases as sole traders. However, as knowledge of ownership was not being tested directly and to be fair to all candidates the Markscheme made it clear that answers were to be marked based on whatever form of ownership was given. It was noticeable that the best answers tended to be based on sole traders, the weakest based on PLC's. This could be worth noting when preparing candidates for future test series.

In general, answers produced a lot of description – with not a lot of analysis (as required by question) being done. This made it difficult to access full marks. Also, answers had to be based on the link between ownership and control. Many candidates seemed to make one comment about ownership or control then throw in all kinds of other unrelated facts about the type of ownership they had stated, few making the link with the relationship between ownership and control, even fewer actually focusing on the control aspects of ownership. There seemed to be a lot of confusion over shareholders, their status and the power that they could actually exert on the day to day running of a business.

1f) again required candidates to name a business and to give its main activities, for context. Specifically, the question asked candidates to use one objective from the chosen business, and to examine to what extent the business is achieving this objective. In many cases candidates gave a good, relevant objective, but placing a measure of 'extent' to which this object is being achieved proved difficult. Lots of answers had no connection with the given objective, just a very general description of the activities of the business or the history of the business, not answering the question and not producing any marks. Overall general business knowledge seemed to be weak. There was little consistency in the given objectives for even the most famous businesses named, which suggested a lot of guesswork was going on. Another indication of weak general business knowledge was the wide range of descriptions given for businesses named, and apparently studied.

Question 2

Parts a) to e) in this question were based on different aspects of the *Pets Protection Society (PPS)*, with additional information given to candidates as they approached each part of the question.

For 2a) candidates were shown an extract from a Job Description for a vacancy at the PPS Head Office. They were asked, what are two other items of information that should appear in the Job Description. Pleased to report that this question was generally understood and answered quite well by most candidates.

2b) asked what three personal qualities would *PPS* look for in an applicant for the position described. Generally well answered. Most candidates could identify 'personal qualities', but some confused this with 'technical skills'.

For 2c) candidates had to examine whether the personal qualities looked for in a *PPS* Shop Manager are likely to be the same as, or different from, those of a *PPS* Head Office Receptionist/Telephonist. Candidates tended to miss requirement to compare 'personal qualities' – just listing the roles and responsibilities that they associated with each job.

Before 2d) candidates were told that *PPS* holds exit interviews for all employees who leave the business. They were then asked to (i) outline two likely reasons that *PPS* will have for holding exit interviews, and (ii) give one benefit to the employee from having an exit interview. Part (i) was generally answered quite well – candidates appear to understand the reason why businesses conduct exit interviews. However, some candidates think that the main reason is to try to persuade the employee not to leave, but of course by the time an exit interview is held this strategy is likely to be too late. Part (ii) was an easy question for candidates who focussed on the employee, but some just repeated the reasons given in part (i).

2e) Candidates were told that Human Resources staff at *PPS* have a number of headings under which the standard exit interview questions are grouped. They were provided with examples of 'open' questions asked as 'General reasons'. Examples of open questions were given for each of three headings: training and development, job/work and leaver's future. Candidates were asked to give an appropriate example of one other open question under each heading that should be asked at an exit interview for *PPS* employees.

Although they had been shown open questions, and the term had been explained, many candidates seemed unsure of what they should write for an open question and hedged their bets by writing a closed question followed by an open supplementary question. Candidates were not penalised for this approach so long as an open question could be identified but this is not really a satisfactory way of answering the question as it relies on the marking team making the judgement as to whether the candidate really knows what is meant by an open question – an open question was asked for and this is what should have been given. So far as the appropriateness of the questions written was concerned, most candidates were able to write good questions based on 'training and development', which suggests that the topic is well understood; 'job/work' was also answered well; 'leaver's future' produced very general questions, many just repeating the example given in the stem of the question.

2f) Candidates had to name a business that they had studied and to give its main activities, for context. They were also asked to name one piece of United Kingdom or European Union legislation that concerns equal opportunities. The actual question was to analyse the influence that this named legislation has on how the chosen business selects a new employee or employees. The first thing that became obvious from the answers given, was the lack of precision in the naming of a piece of legislation. Most were general or colloquial statements, with a vague connection with actual legislation e.g. 'sex discrimination' or 'disabled act'.

Most candidates could give a general comment about the broad content of the legislation that they named, but it proved to be very difficult to 'analyse the influence of the legislation on how the chosen business selects a new employee'. Candidates seemed to ignore the command word 'analyse' and just described a selection process. But this too became problematic as for many candidates 'selection' and 'recruitment' were used interchangeably with no clear differentiation.

The resultant answers demonstrated superficial awareness only, based on what they (the candidate) imagined the named act might mean for a business e.g. 'sex discrimination means you can't discriminate on grounds of sex'. Such low level answers restricted the number of marks the candidates could achieve for this question. Although the requirement to learn about UK or European legislation is not stated in detail in the specification the Examiner's Report for the June 2006 series advises that: *Although there is some guidance (on legislation) in section 1.3 of the*
Unit, for example by reference to minimum wage rates, future questions in this area may expect some knowledge of the following areas of legislation:
- *Sex Discrimination, Race Relations and Disability Discrimination Acts*
- *Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation, and Religion or Belief) Acts*
- *Minimum Wage Act*
- *Working Time Regulations (EU Working Time Directive)*
- *Employment Relations Act*
- *Employment Act (2002)*
- *Employment Rights Act*
- *Part-time Workers Regulations*

There are other items of legislation that affect employee well-being. These include HASAWA and other health/safety legislation, the Equal Pay Act and the Data Protection Act.

Questions may give candidates a choice of legislation from which to
choose, or may name one (major) item only as the single focus for the question.'

This is very sound guidance and reflects a policy that is likely to be carried forward in the assessment of this Unit.

2g) again required candidates to name a business and to give its main activities, for context. They were then asked to evaluate the process used by your chosen business to recruit (but not select) an employee or employees for a particular job role.

This proved to be the best performing of the 'open' questions on this paper. Candidates appeared to understand the recruitment process quite well. Most candidates could list out the steps in the recruitment process, but only the stronger candidates gained the marks for 'evaluation' which appears to be a skill that many lack. Even fewer linked their answer to the job role that they had named. Weaker candidates just gave a description of the job role, not at all what was asked for in this question and an example of were the superficial reading of a question can lead to an inappropriate answer being given. As reported for 2f) many candidates found it difficult to differentiate between 'selection' and 'recruitment'.

Question 3
This section of the paper opened by giving candidates the results of a survey conducted by the managers at Wood City Ltd amongst its employees.

3a) Required candidates to (i) Using one result from the survey, outline how that result shows that *Wood City Ltd* has well-motivated employees; and (ii) Using another result from the survey, outline how that result shows that *Wood City Ltd* has poorly motivated employees.

The flexibility of this question meant that answers were often interchanged between well-motivated/poorly motivated. Candidates often just lifted data from stem with no explanation. As a result, most answers were very general, with little personal opinion or comment in the outlines.

3b) Candidates were told that to encourage its employees to stay, *Wood City Ltd* offers a range of non-financial incentives. These include 'employee of the month' recognition, extra holidays for long-service employees, and 'dressing down days' for office staff.

They were then asked to (i) Give one advantage and one disadvantage to *Wood City Ltd* from using these non-financial incentives, rather than pay increases, to encourage employees to stay. Many candidates just described examples of non-financial incentives, rather than answering the question i.e. giving advantages/disadvantages, even though this was made very clear on the paper by the use of sub-heading prompts. Most candidates seemed to recognise the value of money as an incentive and conversely the disadvantage of non-financial incentives.

For part (ii) candidates had to examine how the 'employee of the month' scheme supports *Wood City Ltd's* aim, "we provide excellent customer service". Pleased to report that this was answered very well by the majority of candidates. Answers brought out the various points as to how and why the scheme supported the aim.

3c) Candidates were informed that *Wood City Ltd* has been offered a contract to make sheds for a national retailer, and that, if the order was accepted, employees would have to work shifts, including night shifts.

The actual question 3c) (i) was to outline how the European Working Time Directive (Working Time Regulations) is likely to influence the given situation.

Most candidates seemed to have a vague understanding of the main principles of the European Working time Directive but there was no precision in the answers and no pattern of common understanding, which suggests a lot of guesswork. The basic knowledge of the Directive was there, but application to the given situation was poor. By not applying this knowledge to the situation described in the stem of the question candidates missed out on potential marks.

For (ii), candidates had to name one stakeholder of *Wood City Ltd* other than customers and employees, and then give two examples of how the change to shift work would affect this (named) stakeholder. This question was answered poorly. Candidates clearly found it difficult to apply the change in work pattern to a stakeholder. As a result, lots of answers were just guesses based on general knowledge rather than the situation described. Perhaps rushing through the question, some candidates did not notice the requirement to name stakeholders other than customers and employees, and just based their answers on these two stakeholders. An example of where reading the question carefully, and reading back the answer given, could have avoided such basic errors and given the candidate the opportunity to score more marks.

3d) Candidates were told that the business encourages all employees to become involved in local community matters. They were then asked how would encouraging such community involvement be likely to motivate *Wood City Ltd's* employees. Candidates found this question very difficult. Many vague and general answers just tossed in words like self-actualisation, or names like Maslow, without any reference to the question or given situation. Lots of repetition of words and examples that had been given in the stem of the question. Clearly a part of the Specification that would repay additional study.

3e) Candidates had to name a business that they had studied and to give its main activities, for context. They than had to select either competition law or trade unions and analyse how whichever they had selected affects the efficient running of the chosen business.

This question produced lots of description but few effects on the chosen businesses.

There was confusion between the distinct entity that is completion law, and the general understanding of competition between organisations. There were even a proportion of answers based on running competitions as a promotional device. Competition law is named in the Specification part 1.4 as one of the legal constraints on a business that should be studied, but given answers suggested that although most candidates may have heard of the concept, only the strongest candidates know what it means for a business.

Understanding of the work of trade unions tended to be superficial and stereotypical based on the way that trade union news is reported in the media.

3f) again required candidates to name a business and to give its main activities, for context. They were then asked to evaluate the extent to which the work of the chosen business is affected by the environmental issue of recycling.

Most answers tended to overlook the specific issue of recycling and latch-on to the general topic of the environment. The result of this was lots of general answers about pollution and environmental campaigns, the topical issue of CO_2 emissions and 'carbon footprints'. Marks were lost because candidates did not answer the specific question asked.

Unit 6917: Investigating Business

This Principal Examiners Report will be available in due course.

Unit 6918: Investigating Marketing

Administration:
Most of the work was again submitted together with the appropriate forms – Mark Record Sheets ("MRS") and "OPTEMS" although not all were fully signed to indicate authenticity and this had 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 generally more accurate than in the previous series with a tendency to leniency evident in the majority of decisions. There were a few instances where assessment was found to be harsh. Most work was again received on time although there were again instances where Centres received Moderators' details late and some candidate work was also sent late by centres.

Annotation of Portfolio Work
The minimum requirement for annotation of portfolios is laid down in the Code of Practice to be identification of where a candidate's evidence of criteria coverage may be found in the work. Many Centres provided this but there were still too many examples where little or no annotation was evident and moderators were left trying to identify where and how marks had been awarded. The recommendation to annotate by reference to "Mark Band" achieved and "Area" covered eg MB1a, MB2b etc is currently still only being followed by around 50% of Centres but it is worth emphasising again the importance of clear annotation for the benefit of candidates and internal standardisation as well as for external moderation purposes.

Presentation of Portfolio Work
One major concern remains the inaccessibility and unsuitable presentation of many of the portfolios with work either tightly packed into plastic wallets (that split on opening) left in ring binders or clipped into plastic folders. The preferred format is loose-leaf, treasury-tagged sheets that can be easily opened, read and returned in the same condition.

General Issues with the Specification:
Slightly less evidence was presented of the largely "academic" approach ie 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 still 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” (or some variation) 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. This emphasised 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 as part of the mix and these added to the whole approach.

Areas of the Specification:

(a) Where candidates had been required to investigate the market, brand, range or some generic product rather than a particular product or service this made for difficulties of analysis. Often, the actual product or service itself 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 tend to become distracted by other issues eg product design and lose 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) In the best work there was again good evidence of suitable research both primary and secondary as the basis for much of the unit coverage. Candidates sometimes spent too long explaining “research” in theory and, 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. Where 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 coverage tended to be fuller. 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) Candidates were again able to discuss the appropriate "P's" but higher marks arose where these were developed through links to research findings (from (b)) 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. The "mix" was too often buried in a mass of discussions about the business or buried in theory eg of "pricing" and it was difficult to always find out eg what actual price(s) would be suggested. One improvement in this area would arise where the reasons and justification for links between the elements of the chosen mix are fully explained. Sometimes, (c) was done in isolation to the (extensive) research findings that could have informed the "4 P's" so much better and more clearly. In many cases candidates had been encouraged to use marketing tools such as the Boston Matrix, Ansoff and many applied these to the mix in an attempt at justification. In reality, the nature of the choice of product or service often rendered discussion of these tools largely irrelevant since they would more commonly apply in the case of larger, multi-product businesses.

(d) Evaluation needs to be of the individual components of the suggested mix rather than just of the (nature of) the chosen product or service as was sometimes the case. Better, more specific evaluations arose where candidates used relevant "SWOT" and/or "PEST" - style approaches (and their variations) and applied these to the components of the mix identified in (c). 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 (and how these could be improved) rather than about the required evidence presented.

Unit 6919: Investigating Electronic Business

To successfully achieve in 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 AOs, 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 AOs and marking criteria bands.

Therefore, in relation to the Unit specification (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, the more contracting the sites the greater the opportunity to explore variation as required in Strand (b).

For Strand (b), a single business needs to be selected (could be from Strand (a)) 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.

Internal 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 should 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.

Unit 6920: Investigating Customer Service

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, the assessment objectives for this unit were met adequately, through written reports, presentation and a detailed witness statement. However, 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, 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 should 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 this 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.

Unit 6921: Investigating Promotion

This is the fourth series for the Investigating Promotions paper. Full details of the approach and standards expected are provided in these introductory notes and through reference to specific questions below. The feedback is based on comments from all examiners involved in marking this unit.

The structure of the paper should now be familiar to both centres and students, as should the emphasis on context and application. There are no plans to change the structure of the paper, nor the very definite reliance on application to real businesses and real business situations, in future papers. Centres and students are, therefore, strongly advised to make use of past papers, their detailed mark schemes and past reports on these papers.

As has been the case from the first paper in the series, and as will be the case for future series, there are two case studies where the business and details are given. For this paper that was Benetton, the clothes producer and retailer, and Pound Lane Videos, a retail outlet for rentals of videos, video games, etc. There will also be three 10 mark questions based on business's promotional campaigns which students have studied during their course. For this paper these were (i) advertising in a national newspaper, (ii) product placement and (iii) the use of a competition for promotion.

Candidates responded well to most of the situations they were presented with and very few questions were not attempted. There is clear evidence that candidates are thinking more carefully about the scenarios and tailoring their answers to them, but frequently not fully enough. This improvement, however, continues to be marred by the four perennial problems that have been referred to in previous reports.

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

a) This is demonstrated most clearly with question 9 where candidates were asked to answer questions based upon a business that had used '**a' competition** as part of a marketing campaign. A very significant number of candidates read this as simply 'competition' and wrote about how a business compared itself to its competitors. Candidates must read questions carefully and check the meaning of every word, even if it is as basic as being the word 'a'.

b) Many candidates read questions, think they know what they have been asked to do and then launch themselves into writing the answer without checking the question again. This was very evident with some candidates in question 5. The instruction was very clear – 'Considering the information in **Figure 2**…' Despite that a significant number of candidates decided to simple write about the benefits and drawback of using an agency with no reference to any of the information in Figure 2 at all. Candidates should always read a question twice and then re-read it having written their answers to ensure that what they have put down does actually answers the question set.

c) Many candidates had only the vaguest understanding of the role of the ASA in question 3 and many candidates did not know what product placement means for question 8. Candidates must have knowledge of all terminologies used in the syllabus and should have an understanding of commonly used promotional tools, such as competitions.

d) Most questions will have more than one element within them because this provides the required level of context for what is an applied 'A' level. In question 1(b) candidates were asked for 'benefits to Benetton of using a catalogue' but also for a catalogue being used for '**promoting the type of products that it produces**'. In 6(a) candidates were asked to give 'benefits of using leaflets' but '**for this kind of information**'. All of the questions on this paper are set within a specific context and the vast majority will have significant marks allocated to reference to that situation in terms of how answers should be developed, reasoned and applied.

Comments on specific questions

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

Basic details for the two main scenarios will be given at the start of each set of questions that relate to that scenario, in this case in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The information given about each business may be useful for any of the questions that relate to that scenario, and candidates should be prepared to look back at each figure as they progress through the questions to see if there is any information that would help them to answer the specific question they are on.

1(a) – Most candidates were able to score reasonably well on this question. The answers did need to relate to the catalogue being available on line and not just to this being a catalogue. Answers also had to relate to the benefits for the customer, not for the business. Many answers were generic, but candidates who thought about the context did find it relatively easy to gain full marks.

1(b) – This question was about using a catalogue for promoting, not just general benefits of most promotional tools and methods. Some candidates took very general approaches such as 'persuading customers to buy its goods'. Without application to why catalogues are particularly appropriate no marks would be gained. For this question there also needed to be clear benefits to the business, not just for the customer.

Candidates who did not make very general points nor write about benefits to the business found it fairly easy to score 3 or 4 marks. However, only candidates who read the question carefully and responded to all parts gained higher marks. A very high majority failed to relate their answers to the type of products (clothes) that were being promoted through catalogues.

2(a) This was very well answered by the majority of candidates who clearly understand how sponsorship works. Where candidates did lose marks this generally came from not following the instruction 'Using Benetton…' or not explaining sufficiently what the sponsor provides. The stem to Q2 gave candidates details of Benetton's sponsorship, but some candidates still ignored this and used other businesses for their answers. Some candidates explaining the role of the sponsor said no more than that it 'sponsors' another business or team, etc., with no details of what that means. That was not sufficient.

2(b) Most candidates scored some marks here but the approach was usually very general. Only a minority referred to Benetton's position as an international business and only the best candidates provided in depth reasoning as to why the Formula 1 team being international would help Benetton because of this.

2(c) Weaker candidates tended to guess at the answer rather than use the information they had been given in the stem to Q2 or in Figure 1. Answers such as 'Formula 1 has become less popular' required significantly more justification from candidates than the very speculative approach many took. Candidates who used the information provided, such as not winning the Championship since 1995 scored well, but only the best candidates gave full well reasoned answers.

2(d) Most candidates could score some marks here but often weaker candidates seemed to answer without thinking about the information they had been given. A typical wrong answer was to suggest that the reason why Benetton sponsored teams in Treviso was because Treviso was Benetton's largest market. This ignored the fact that Benetton sells clothes in over 200 countries and has 500 of its own stores worldwide. Other answers concentrated on general benefits of sponsorship, such as increasing brand awareness, with no specific reference to Treviso or the teams being sponsored there.

3(a) This was poorly answered by most candidates. The main problem arose through the use of the word 'offensive' without the required degree of offensiveness. The Code specifically uses the term 'decent' and, when it refers to offence, it states that this must be 'serious or widespread offence'. It also very specifically states: 'The fact that a particular product is offensive to some people is not sufficient grounds for objecting to a marketing communication for it.' Candidates needed to refer to the degree of offensiveness or to tie it to the main grounds on which this will be considered which are race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or disability.

3(b) It is very clear that the majority of candidates do know what the ASA actually does, beyond assessing advertisements to see that they comply with the need to be legal, decent, honest and truthful. The ASA can ask for advertisements to be changed or not shown but they cannot enforce bans, impose fines or take broadcasters, agencies or the businesses which are advertising to court. These are roles of Ofcom or the Office of Fair Trading.

This question also asked for distinct steps and often what candidates were putting down were simply parts of the same step. For example, watching the advertisement and deciding if it is decent are both part of the assessment process. Deciding what action to take if it is found not to be decent would be a separate step. Some candidates gave steps that would have taken place before the ASA received the complaint, such as the consumer writing to them. This was again a result of not reading the question carefully enough.

3(c) Most candidates could state a valid reason and many used the information given in the stem to Q3. Despite a lot of writing many candidate gave no more than a basic objective with a stated reason. There was limited analysis carried out and weak explanations of how the pictures would, or would not, achieve the objective that had been given. Some candidates, who did analyse the situation, produced excellent answers which showed a sophisticated appreciation of Benetton's controversial advertising.

4(a) Most candidates were able to show why the special offer would bring in more customers and create higher sales and revenue but very few went on to explain why this would be cost effective for the business. There were some candidates who thought that cost effective meant that there would be an increase in costs and then argued for why this would be damaging to Pound Lane Videos. Cost effectiveness is a basic business concept and students really ought to be comfortable with this.

4(b) Again this was well answered by most candidates although many answers were based on common sense rather than a full analysis of how the promotion worked in the context of the time limits of a maximum 24 hour rental period and the need to return DVDs by 6.00 p.m. Some candidates argued that this would be a drawback for the business rather than for the customer.

5 There were some excellent answers for this question making very good use of the information in Figure 2 and relating it to their knowledge and understanding of the features of advertising agencies. However, as noted in the introductory comments, many candidates ignored the instruction to consider the information in Figure 2 and simply wrote general comments about using an advertising agency. It was the context of a limited budget, having run the business for 15 years, providing a service for a town of only 4,000 households, etc., on which the question was based and without reference to these elements candidates could not provide any justification for their advice to Bill.

6(a) Most candidates had no problem with providing at least one valid benefit and many candidates could provide two, but very few candidates went on to relate these to the 'kind of information' that was being put on the leaflets. Where candidates thought about the information, and especially that it was about special offers and new DVDs coming out in the next month, they found it relatively easy to identify suitable characteristics of leaflets, such as the fact that they are relatively cheap to produce and can be kept to remind customers about what is on offer. It was then easy for them to state the benefit in terms of the kind of information. The other reason why candidates failed to score was because they gave very general answers, such as 'customers will then know about the business' which said nothing specifically about leaflets.

6(b) Many answers here tended to be one sided which significantly limited the marks that could be gained. The question asked for comparison of the two methods. Where this was done candidates were able to score high marks with little difficulty. There were, however, some misconceptions about how these promotions would be carried out, partly due to not reading the stem to Q6 carefully enough. Some candidates argued that people might not go and pick up the free papers when it had clearly stated that they were being delivered.

There were even some students who argued that less leaflets would be seen in the papers because people might not be willing to buy the paper. Other candidates assumed that the students would not be paid for delivering the leaflets or that this would be cheaper than having them delivered with the free newspaper because of the minimum wage.

Questions based on own study of examples during the course
Because each of these questions carry 10 marks it is important that student think about the following points:

(a) These questions can be on any part of the syllabus so it is vital that as students study this unit they are building a very wide range of real promotional campaigns, examples of promotional tool and methods being used and actual applied constraints. Without this wide range of material to use candidates could find that they are faced with a topic area that they simply cannot provide answers for.

(b) For these questions it is vital that candidates select a business, product or promotional campaign that will allow them to answer all of the questions. Candidates should, therefore, read all of the questions before choosing the product. There has been evidence of candidates choosing only on the basis of part (a), starting to answer, finding that it was the wrong choice, but still trying to carry on with it.

(c) Generally these questions are written so that it is possible for candidates to get the first part(s) wrong, as with confusing product placement with sponsorship in Q7, but still gain marks in the later part(s). It is, therefore, important that candidates do attempt all parts of the question, even if they are uncertain about some parts. Examples are given below against the actual questions.

(d) Some candidates give very vague details of what the business, product or campaign is. For example, in Q8, simply saying 'Ipod' for the product, 'music video' for the medium and then giving very limited details in the rest of the answers is insufficient. When this is done it is sometime impossible for examiners to identify which real promotion is being written about. This can result in candidates scoring no marks for the whole of the question. Candidates must provide sufficient information about the business, product or campaign to ensure that it can be identified as being real. Usually this will be done in part (a) but sometimes candidates may have forgotten specific details but the way in which they provide details in (b), (c), etc., will allow the examiners to identify the actual business, product or campaign the candidate is referring to.

7 – This question was generally well answered by most candidates with marks being lost for fairly simple errors or from lack of development.

7(a) The main reasons why marks were lost here were: (i) candidates writing 'where' the advertisement was placed instead of 'when' and (ii) candidates describing the size of the advertisements in too general a way, such as large, medium or small. For (i), candidates needed to read the question more carefully, especially as exactly the same question is being asked in part (b). For (ii), candidates needed to consider the terminology that actual businesses will use for size, such as quarter page and column inches/cm.

7(b) Most candidates scored both marks available for part (i) and then went on to give good basic reasoning in part (ii). Some candidates' answers to both parts were very vague, e.g., 'in the middle of the paper…because it would be seen'. Other candidates gave answers to the question 'Why was it put in this particular paper?' This does reflect trend in that candidates do not always read the questions carefully enough but also that one word can be converted into something that is simply not there. In this case the word 'position' seems to have been converted into the word 'newspaper'.

7(c) Many candidates simply described features of the advertisement but did not explain how these would lead to appeal. It was not sufficient to simply state that it would appeal without showing why. The best approach was to identify the target market and then show how the specific feature of the advertisement would appeal to that target market because of its typical characteristics. Candidates who did this generally scored all 3 marks.

8 – As was pointed out in the introductory comments, a significant minority of candidates did not know what 'product placement' meant. This was mainly caused by confusion between product placement, where the product is shown within the film, TV series, etc., and a sponsorship agreement that allows advertisement to be placed before, after, or in the intervals. There were many examples of these types of sponsorship related to TV series, such as Cadbury sponsoring Coronation Street and Herbal Essences sponsoring Desperate Housewives. There were also examples of straight forward advertising being placed before films, etc., for example Orange advertising its mobile phone services before films in the cinema.

An additional complication was caused by confusion between businesses in some way paying to have their product placed and products that were placed because that was a suitable product for the film, TV series, etc. This was most obviously evident when candidates took BBC programmes as their examples, e.g., East Enders. The BBC has a very strict code of behaviour which states that programme makers are not permitted to accept any financial reward for placing products in their programmes.

8(a) Candidates gained their mark for this question simply on the basis of whether or not a valid example of product placement had been given. Some candidates answered the second part by repeating what was in the question, e.g., writing 'film' instead of stating which particular film the product had been placed in. If this specific film could not be identified by the details given in (b), (c) or (d) is was possible that candidates could have lost all of the available marks for Q8.

8(b) Most candidates who understood the term could provide details of what was happening in the film, etc., and give explanations of how the audience was made aware of the product itself. Some candidates gave too little description to gain the full three marks.

8(c) Usually candidates who understood product placement gave very good answers. The best reasoning related to financial rewards for the producers or the appropriateness of the product for what was being shown in the film, etc. Where candidates had used the sponsorship approach in parts (a) & (b) it was still possible to gain good marks here for why the business would accept that sponsorship, usually on a financial basis.

8(d) Where candidates had identified a paid product placement this was generally well answered. A problem occurred when product placements were chosen by the producers of the programmes, films, etc., rather than the producers of the products. In this situation there would generally be no way of discussing why ‘the business chose that particular film…’ Candidates should have pointed this out for, say, EastEnders placements, stating that they had not chosen the placement but that it had major benefits for their products.

9 - As was pointed out in the introductory comments, a very significant minority of candidates wrote about businesses competing rather than a competition which consumers entered. This meant that candidates could score no marks for parts (a) and (b). It would have been possible to score marks for part (c) as long as these candidates could have explained the way in which the business had publicised this competition between the business and it competitors but few were able to do this with any real detail. Many of these candidates only scored the mark for identifying how the competition was publicised.

Some candidates took the approach of a business sponsoring a competition such as the Carling Cup. This was not the intended approach but it was acceptable.

9(a) This was generally well answered with the majority of candidates who used a competition getting full marks.

9(b) Most candidates had little difficult in identifying the main objective but only the better candidates went on to explain how a competition helped to support achieving this objective.

9(c) Most candidates used examples of advertising for this part of the question, but other examples of publicising were also valid, especially where competing against other businesses was being explained. A valid approach there would have been a business showing its list of prices compared to those of its competitors.

For part (ii) many candidates, yet again, did not respond to the full question. A typical example was to take television as the method and then just give general comments such as it would reach a wide audience. The question had asked for why it was a suitable way to publicise ‘this competition’, and that needed reference to some element of the competition, for example this was a nation wide competition with many attractive prizes so television was a cost effective way of reaching a wide audience.

Information for future series

The points listed below include comments made in previous reports and these should be checked for the full details.

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/following instructions** – 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 it is unclear what question their response answers. 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.

Unit 6922: Investigating Enterprise
This Principal Examiner Report will be available in due course.

Unit 6923: Business Development

Administration

Declaration of Assessment Conditions
Additionally for this Unit there was a requirement for assessors to identify those aspects of the work that had been completed under "controlled conditions" (as laid down by the Awarding Body) as well as those activities contributing to the Unit that had been completed outside of these. These sheets were not always presented with the work but future submissions will require them to be made available for moderation. Inclusion of these would have removed the need for such large appendices as were found in some portfolios as well as reducing the inclusion of the volumes of research material done outside of the controlled conditions that did not need to be left within the completed work.

Annotation of Portfolio Work
The minimum requirement for annotation is laid down in the Joint Council Instructions requesting identification of where a candidate's evidence of criteria coverage may be found in the work. Many Centres provided this but there were still too many examples where little or no annotation was evident and moderators were left trying to identify where and how marks had been awarded. The recommendation to annotate by reference to "Mark Band" achieved and "Area" covered eg MB1a, MB2b etc is currently only being followed by around 50% of Centres but it is worth emphasising again the importance of clear annotation for the benefit of candidates and internal standardisation as well as for external moderation purposes.

Presentation of Portfolio Work
For this Unit particularly, notwithstanding the need to produce some of the work under "controlled conditions", it was anticipated that the final document would be suitably presented to meet the needs of a potential investor but most work seen contained far too many irrelevancies. In future, with further guidance to be issued, it is to be hoped that portfolios will more closely resemble a business development plan.

One other concern is the inaccessibility and unsuitable presentation of many of the portfolios with work either tightly packed into plastic wallets (that split on opening) left in ring binders or clipped into plastic folders. The preferred format is loose-leaf, treasury-tagged sheets that can be easily opened, read and returned in the same condition.

Most of the work was submitted together with the appropriate forms – Mark Record Sheets ("MRS") and "OPTEMS" (but see note on "declaration of assessment conditions above) 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.

General comments on the Specification:
Edexcel GCE Applied Business Unit 8 (6923) is a compulsory tested Unit at A2 for both the single and double award. It is the synoptic unit for the qualification – drawing from other AS and A2 units (see specification for details) and is intended to be submitted only at the end of the (usually two-year) course. Although the completed business development plan has to be produced under "controlled conditions" this is more about ensuring authenticity, avoiding plagiarism, downloaded information and basic copying than about putting candidates under pressure. The initial assessment of this unit is derogated to centres but subject to external moderation ie after internal assessment it is sent to an external moderator in the same way as other portfolio-based units. The intention is that candidates produce as professional-looking a finished document as possible. The amount of time under "controlled conditions" is to be viewed as part of the total delivery time for the Unit and it is essential that the delivery of the unit is carefully planned into the delivery of the whole programme.

There are many sources of information available on the format suitable for a business development plan. There are several examples of these kinds of documents in use such as those provided by the high street banks, ones available on websites, even the Sunday Times produces a "How to write a business plan" guide.

Areas of the Specification:

(a) and (b) In many cases, coverage of these was reasonably well done although in some cases where work had been developed from 6917 (Investigating Business) it was done with little enhancement. Whilst 6917 is about the ideas and concepts behind business planning the emphasis here should be on detail and realism; the more these are considered, the better will be the financial details and projection/evaluation in (c) and (d). In some cases, the scale and scope of the proposed development plans were simply too ambitious eg ideas requiring the establishment of a "chain" of outlets or those where 30+ staff were to be hired are really beyond what is feasible or likely.

As the scenario was "given" there was no need to dwell on legal definitions of all types of ownership (the proposal could only be a sole trader or partnership) and no requirement to investigate the theory of sampling or principles of marketing as were found in some of the work seen. Better candidates had observed the need for realism and provided some greater depth of detail on the practicalities of the proposed development and better application of what issues such as "marketing", "production/distribution" and "quality" would mean practically to their businesses rather than "regurgitate" theory on market models, JIT, TQM and the like. Service-based ideas (eg small cafes, takeaways and bars) often overlooked the need for meeting food handling and other hygiene regulations or forgot the need for some trained staff. Insurance aspects were also often omitted as were simple management plans on how the concern would run on a day to day basis. As explained above, there was no need to include eg all the questionnaires used or provide such great detail on why/how the research was done – these could have been referenced back to work held in the Centre and this would have slimmed down the final product considerably.

(c) Where realistic and sound research had been undertaken then the financial aspect (and heart of the proposal) was more likely to emerge but in too many instances figures from research had not been followed through (or were lacking the detail needed) and many accounts contained basic errors and omissions. These included basic omissions from cash flow forecasts eg sole traders who took no drawings or paid no National Insurance contributions or businesses that had (apparently) no current liabilities eg cash-based concerns that did not use banking facilities and had no premises.

Insufficient attention was paid to sources of finance ranging from work that made no mention (or use) of the original legacy and those businesses that made no mention of the importance of overdraft facilities to those that borrowed often large sums of money with little collateral and (apparently) made no repayments! By contrast, candidates who were able to use IT to produce forecasts were able to generate Trading & Profit and Loss Accounts and Balance Sheets that worked. Even without this, conventional formats should produce more definite accounts than some of those seen.

(d) Evaluations and projections were largely weak, especially where (c) had been poorly done. Few candidates seemed able to comment upon any liquidity or profitability ratios that were calculated or explain how additional finance might be found. Simply reviewing the original proposal in the light of the figures in (c) would have given the basis for some projection as would consideration as to why the proposal now looked better (or worse) than other business ideas mooted in (a).

Assessment of both (c) and (d) was often very lenient – candidates being awarded MB3 for little more than broad considerations of what might happen in the future, unrelated to any of the financial predictions made. Alternatively, unable to comment informatively upon the figures produced, candidates made broad, unqualified, descriptive statements that could have been true in the future for any business development proposal.

Some sound work was presented but what was disappointing was that much of the work seen appeared to have overlooked the requirement laid down in the given scenario of the need to present the work as a document suitable for a potential financier and many portfolios exceeded 100 pages in length!

Unit 6924: Managing & Developing People

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 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. Candidates 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, candidates 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, candidates 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; candidates 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 and include 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.

Unit 6925: Marketing Decisions

This is the second series for the Marketing Decisions paper. Full details of the approach and standards expected are provided in these introductory notes and through reference to specific questions below. The feedback is based on comments from all examiners involved in marking this unit.

It is clear that candidates have benefited from the opportunity of studying both the sample paper and a live paper. As the series progress it is important that less reliance is made of the sample paper as that has not gone through the full paper preparation process.

The structure of the paper should now be familiar to both centres and students, as should the emphasis on context, application and decision making. There are no plans to change the structure of the paper, nor the very definite reliance on application to real businesses and real business situations, in future papers. Centres and students are, therefore, strongly advised to make use of past papers, their detailed mark schemes and past reports on these papers.

The first 70 marks on the paper relate to a single scenario, in this case Manton Coaches. The questions are preceded by a fairly lengthy outline of the business. The information given there may be useful for any of the questions related to that scenario, and candidates should be prepared to look back at these details as they progress through the questions to see if there are any points that would help them to answer the specific question they are on.

There will also be two 10 mark questions based on business's marketing campaigns which students have studied during their course. For this paper these were about (i) above-the-line and below-the-line promotion, and (ii) the cash cow section of the Boston Matrix. Further details on how to study for and choose suitable marketing campaigns for the actual questions which have been set are given later on.

Candidates responded well to most of the situations they were presented with and very few questions were not attempted. There is clear evidence that candidates are thinking more carefully about the scenarios and tailoring their answers to them, but frequently not fully enough. There was also some very good analysis of the data provided. These positive points, however, were marred by the following widely present problems.

e) Not reading the questions carefully enough.
f) Not following instructions.
g) A lack of basic knowledge of basic facts and terminologies.
h) Not relating the answers to the specific context given.
i) Not analysing data carefully enough.

a) This was demonstrated clearly in Q7(a) where a significant number of candidates gave details of the business in general rather than of a specific campaign. Candidates must read questions carefully and ensure they answer what has actually been asked.

b) Many candidates read questions, think they know what they have been asked to do and then launch themselves into writing the answer without checking the question again. This was evident with some candidates in Q1. The instruction 'using the information in Figure 1,' was ignored by some candidates who gave examples of the elements of PEST that were not shown there, for example, higher levels of income tax. Candidates should always read a question twice and then re-read it, having written their answers, to ensure that what they have put down does actually answers the question set.

c) Many candidates do not know all the basic terminologies referred to in the syllabus. This was particularly evident with Q2 where candidates either did not know what the elements of the Ansoff Matrix meant, or muddled them up. Sampling is also an area of the syllabus where many candidates do not know the basic terminologies, particularly sample frame in Q4(a) and cluster sampling in Q4(b).

d) All questions are set in a specific context and marks are allocated for application to that context. For Q5(c), for example, the question superficially might be thought to be about ways of promoting the business, but the need to take the context into consideration meant that no marks would have been achieved without clear application back to the data on the final part of Table 1. Frequently the starting point for candidates will be the selection of the right piece of information from the details they have been given.

e) The Marketing Decision papers will have some questions where data needs to be carefully analysed before the answers can be given. Q5(c) was such a question in which marks were lost because of poor analysis. Some candidates seemed to assume that these were percentage figures and, for example, assumed that price was more important in Leicester (at 64) than in Birmingham (at 62) when in fact the figures only showed the numbers for those responding 'yes' to the first question. In percentage terms this would have given Leicester 70% and Birmingham 79%.

Comments on specific questions

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

1(a) – Most candidate were able to score 4 to 6 marks for this question. Marks were generally lost because candidates did not refer to Figure 1 and many candidates did not understand the social element of PEST. Some candidates put down location as an example. Whilst this is part of demography, which is an acceptable approach to the social aspect, it needed more detail to explain why it would be social. Occupation, employment/unemployment, age etc., would have been better elements to take because they could easily have been related to the information in Figure 1, e.g., works outings, rising levels of unemployment and types of day or evening trips.

1(b) – There were many candidates who extracted the right information from Figure 1 and gained 4 marks. Few candidates responded to the word 'assess' and generally only one sided answers were given.

2 - On average this question was poorly answers with candidates only scoring 4 to 5 marks out of the 16 marks that were available. The major reason for this was that candidates simply did not know what the terms meant. Many muddled them up with each other and others muddled them with terminologies from other parts of marketing as with confusing market penetration and penetration pricing.

Marks were also lost by not reading the question carefully enough or not thinking about the information that had already been given in Figure 1. Some candidates ignored the data in Figure 1 and either suggested strategies that were inappropriate or ones that were already being used by Manton Coaches. Candidates must know the meaning and basic characteristics of the elements of these marketing tools. Where candidates could select appropriate examples in part (i) they tended to give good explanations in part (ii).

3 - Generally this question was well answered, especially in part (i), with the majority of candidates going for the internet as the source and a significant proportion for Yellow Pages. These choices also made it relatively easy to identify elements of the marketing mix that would be difficult to research using this source. Where candidates failed to score was, for a few, through choosing a primary source such as conducting a questionnaire, or, for considerable more, by selecting government publications. In general, government publications would not provide Manton Coaches with details about its competitors in specific cities and unless candidates could give a more specific source, such as Companies House, they were not awarded marks.

4(a) - The answers to this question were very disappointing with the majority of candidates scoring no marks and some candidates not even attempting an answer. The reason for this seems to be that most candidates simply did not know what the term meant. Some candidates also misread the question and assumed it had asked why Claire had not got her teams to survey all 111,148 households. Candidates who understood the term usually then scored 2 marks or the full 3 marks.

4(b) – Again this was poorly answered by the majority of candidates because they did not understand the term. These elements of marketing research are clearly highlighted in the syllabus and examination questions will assume that candidates know and understand them so that they can be applied to specific situations. Also with this question there were candidates who interpreted the question as asking 'Why did Claire use cluster sampling?'

4(b) - There were some very good answers for this question with candidates selecting appropriate details from the way the survey had been conducted and then showing why some views and opinions could well have been missed. Usually this was done on the basis of different characteristics in different parts of a city related to wealth, income, interests, etc. A common misconception was that the number of people asked was not statistically valid. Generally that would not be true and very sophisticated explanations, which were not forthcoming, would have needed to support such an assertion.

The question did ask candidates to 'evaluate' and that needed two sides to the argument or some degree of how well or badly the views would be represented. Very few candidates responded to this trigger word.

5(a) - This was very disappointingly answered, mainly through lack of thought about what the data actually showed or possibly through candidates not expressing themselves clearly enough. Many candidates simply stated that some people, or people in the household, took more than one trip in a year. Whilst that had to be true, it was the nature of the trips that had to make the difference, otherwise the figures would have been identical. A significant minority did make this point but only the best candidates went on to give an example from the types of trips on offer.

5(b) - Most candidates scored some marks here and there were some well reasoned answers that used the data in the table to support their choice of the best market. Some candidates did not relate this to the type of services shown in the section 'What did they use the coaches for?' but to the price, safety and comfort offered. This was acceptable, if unintended when the question was set, but some candidates then seeing that Q5(c) was essentially asking a similar question, in part, decided not to answer (c).

The best answers here took Birmingham as the most suitable city because of the match to Manton Coaches main activities on Figure 1. Some very good answers worked out the relative numbers for the three cities in order to support this choice. Weaker candidates often miscalculated the totals or misread the absolute figures and consequently gave the wrong choice and the wrong reasoning.

5(c) - The average mark here was only 3 marks. Some candidates did not seem to note that this was a question out of 8 marks and therefore needed considerable development and explanation in the answer. Most candidates could identify similarities or differences in what different target markets felt was important to them, but this was generally very poorly converted into an explanation of how these similarities or differences would affect the way the business promoted itself. Typical explanations would be 'safety is most important in all three cities so Manton Coaches should promote safety'. The good explanations tied the safety element back to the details provided one Figure 1.

6(a) - There was a rather scatter gun approach to this question. Most candidates appreciated that coach companies cause pollution by running coaches but the actually pollution was frequently guessed at. Where candidate simply said that this would cause pollution they did not score marks, not without additional explanation. At A2 level more application is needed. For full marks here the specified environmental effect, such as global warning, needed to be given, and the cause from the business activity, such as exhaust fumes including carbon dioxide, needed to be explained.

Some of the best answers came from candidates who did not take the obvious air pollution approach but consider other environmental effects, for example potentially drunken supporters returning from a sporting event and causing noise pollution. The need to explain this more obscure approach frequently meant that all the required elements of the answer would be there.

6(b) - For many candidates the mention of the 'market mix' seems to trigger a reaction that they must consider all elements of the mix. With marketing decisions a business will always consider the most appropriate element(s).

The first step for the candidate is, therefore, to check the context of the question. Here it was a potential negative environmental effect. That should have made candidates think about image and with that some way of negating any negative image. That should then have lead candidates to think about either promotion (especially PR) or changing the product so that it was not an environmental problem. The best candidates took this approach. The weaker candidates just selected any part of the mix, e.g., price, and gave an action, such as lowering the price, that was difficult to justify against the environmental effect.

Questions based on own study of examples during the course

Because each of these questions carry 10 marks it is important that student think about the following points:

(a) These questions can be on any part of the syllabus so it is vital that as students study this unit they are building a very wide range of real promotional campaigns, examples of promotional tool and methods being used and actual applied constraints. Without this wide range of material to use candidates could find that they are faced with a topic area that they simply cannot provide answers for.

(b) For these questions it is vital that candidates select a business, product or promotional campaign that will allow them to answer all of the questions. Candidates should, therefore, read all of the questions before choosing the product. There has been evidence of candidates choosing only on the basis of part (a), starting to answer, finding that it was the wrong choice, but still trying to carry on with it.

(c) Generally these questions are written so that it is possible for candidates to get the first part(s) wrong, as with not knowing the distinction between above and below the line in Q7, but still gaining marks in the later part(s). It is, therefore, important that candidates do attempt all parts of the question, even if they are uncertain about some parts. Examples are given below against the actual questions.

(d) Some candidates give very vague details of what the business, product or campaign is. When this is done it is sometime impossible for examiners to identify which real promotion is being written about. This can result in candidates scoring no marks for the whole of the question. Candidates must provide sufficient information about the business, product or campaign to ensure that it can be identified as being real. Usually this will be done in part (a) but sometimes candidates may have forgotten specific details but the way in which they provide details in (b), (c), etc., will allow the examiners to identify the actual business, product or campaign the candidate is referring to.

7 – Most candidates attempted this question even when they were not absolutely certain about the distinction between the two terms. That was the right approach and allowed candidates to score some marks across all of the sub-questions.

7(a) - Candidates lost marks here because they referred to a business, such as Tesco, carrying out general advertising of its products. What was needed was a specific campaign, which should have been studied during the course, for example sports equipment, computer equipment for schools.

7(b) - Many candidates did not know the distinction between these two terms. The most common error was to give two examples of above-the-line promotion.

7(c) - This allowed candidates to refer to any method of promotion identified in part (i) even if it was incorrectly classified. But, this did need the application to the target population. Candidates needed to explain why the method was suitable for the identified target market. Good candidates could do this, and scored well. Weaker candidates had very tenuous links to the target market, the product or the campaign and frequently scored very low marks or no marks.

8 – This was not well answered by the majority of candidates. Most candidates clearly knew what a 'cash cow' was but had a very poor understanding of the marketing decisions that are associated with this.

8(a) - Part (a) needed the choice of a product that matched an understanding of the two axes used in the matrix. High market share was not usually a problem, but low market growth (not for the specific product, but for the market as a whole) was more difficult to identify. There are many cash cows out in the market, but if they are not obvious, therefore candidates need to be justifying their choice in parts (a), (b) or (c).

8(b) This question required a sophisticated understanding of how cash cows are created and maintained. Many candidates gave rather descriptive details of the current marketing mix elements, but generally with no reference to the cash cow position. Only the very best candidates seemed to appreciate that a cash cow position has very significant marketing decision impacts.

8(c) - The answers to this question, by the minority of candidates, showed a good understanding of how the Boston Matrix and the product life cycle relate to each other. However, most candidates did not understand this relationship and generally guessed at one stage in the cycle. Having guessed, They were generally unable to justify the stage.

Information for future series

This is a relatively new award and if candidates are to improve their marks they need to consider all of the following points.

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/following instructions** – 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.

Unit 6926: Impact of Finance on Business Decisions

Administration

Most centres submitted portfolios on time. Administration was generally good. Annotation of the work, though 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 and 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 second series for this unit. Approaches varied from the largely "academic" – e.g. candidates producing 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 business (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 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 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 Teachers' 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. Sensitive 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.

Unit 6927: International Dimemsions Of Business

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 AOs, 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 AOs and marking criteria bands.

Therefore, in relation to the Unit specification (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 generally generic rather than specific 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. Candidates need to consider a wider range of IOs and explain and evaluate their impact in terms of the full extent of the IOs Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats on the chosen 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 learner 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.

Internal 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 Strand (a).
Centres should ensure, when assessing especially in relation to the higher mark bands across all Strands 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.

Unit 6928: Organising an Event

This Principal Examiner Report will be available in due course.

Unit 6929- External Influences on Business

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 specification (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
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.

Internal 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 evalutory narrative.

Statistics

6916	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	90	64	57	50	44	38	32
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6917	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	48	42	36	30	24	18
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6918	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	48	42	36	30	25	20
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6919	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	49	43	38	33	28	23
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6920	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	48	42	36	30	24	18
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6921	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	90	63	56	49	42	36	30
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6922	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	49	43	37	31	25	19
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6923	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	90	72	63	54	45	37	29
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6924	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	48	42	36	30	25	20
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6925	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	90	54	48	42	37	32	27
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6926	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	48	42	36	30	24	18
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6927	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	48	42	36	30	24	18
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6928	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	50	44	38	32	27	22
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

6929	Max	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	49	43	37	31	26	21
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

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