



General Certificate of Education

Business Studies 2130

BUSS3 Strategies for Success

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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General Comments

In this series whilst there were many examples of students who demonstrated good understanding of the concepts being examined, there were also significant numbers of students who appeared to have only limited knowledge. Many students appeared to have spent insufficient time reading the case study material and, consequently, their answers often revealed a number of misconceptions. Students should be encouraged to take plenty of time to familiarise themselves with the case study and Appendices and to plan their answers, especially the longer, evaluative ones.

Administration

Centres are thanked for preparing so thoroughly their candidates to work with the new numbering system and the new style answer book. The majority of candidates responded well to the changes to the June 2010 exams, but where difficulties were experienced, centres are asked to draw candidates' attention to the comprehensive range of guidance material that is available on this subject in order that they are confident about what is required of them in future examinations. Support available on this issue includes Guides for teachers and students, and specimen question papers and mark schemes showing the changes in action. All documents published in support of the changes to exams can be accessed via notices published on all qualification homepages, all subject notice boards, and on the parent and student area of the web.

Question One

Students who knew the average rate of return (ARR) formula usually gained full marks as they were able to complete the calculation successfully and compare the result with the directors' expectations. A common mistake was to incorrectly calculate the overall profit by forgetting to subtract the initial cost of the investment.

Weaker students revealed only limited understanding of the ARR formula and could only complete a partial calculation. Others attempted a payback calculation instead.

Question Two

A minority of students revealed good understanding of workforce planning and also scored highly for application and analysis by considering the key influences that the business needed to consider. High marks for evaluation were awarded to those students who were able to prioritise which influence would be the most important and recommended how it could be addressed.

Disappointingly, many students appeared to have only limited knowledge of workforce planning. Relevant issues, such as training and labour turnover, were awarded 'content' marks but, commonly, these were not linked to the actual case study. Other answers revealed confused understanding by referring to topics such as 'hard' and 'soft' HRM or organisational structures. Another common fault was that students failed to answer the question by writing about the 'pros and cons' of workforce planning, rather than the issues that needed to be considered when implementing a workforce plan.

Workforce planning appears to be commonly misunderstood and it is important that centres ensure that their students have sound knowledge of this concept.

Question Three

The majority of students revealed good understanding of critical path analysis. Those candidates who recalculated the critical path were able to analyse well and were awarded higher marks. The skill of good evaluation was less evident; often students would only discuss the limitations of critical path analysis by referring to the accuracy of the actual figures, rather than writing in context.

Weaker students tended to simply describe the different stages in the network diagram rather than answering the question set.

Question Four

The best answers were well structured with a few well developed and applied points from both sides of the argument. The strongest answers were those that linked data from different parts of the case study. Students who were able to interpret the data tended to score highly. In terms of evaluation, the most impressive answers were those that made a definitive conclusion based upon their prior analysis and also made recommendations regarding any further actions that may be required.

Weaker answers tended to be unstructured and often simply listed or described too many points without any development. Conclusions consequently were superficial and often simply repeated previous points. Many students had failed to properly understand the case study and, consequently, included a number of misconceptions in their answers.

Exam technique is crucial in answering this question. In preparing students, it is important that centres stress the importance of ensuring that students:

- fully understand the case study
- can identify the main arguments for and against the proposed strategy
- can write a well reasoned conclusion.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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