

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

International GCE Business In A Global
Context (WBS04)

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Publications Code IA038267

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General comments

Although the number of entrants was greater than in January it was still a small entry, which is perhaps not surprising as it is the final unit in a two year course. As in the January exam there were some very weak responses that showed little understanding of, or even familiarity with, the specification content and the standard expected of an A2 candidate. Nevertheless there were some good and occasionally very good responses to the questions set.

The main reasons for some otherwise able students underachieving are the usual ones of not heeding command words and not reading the questions carefully enough. Command words are still being ignored by a sizeable number. Instructions to 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' were not followed by some candidates.

Some of the students missed out on marks because they did not answer the question that was set. This was particularly the case with question 5. Some students missed out several whole questions.

It is worth reminding future students of the need to apply context to all responses. Repeating generic or stock answers will not access the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 1a

Most students could give examples of infrastructure but very few were able to develop a meaningful definition and so failed to get both marks.

Question 1b

A mostly well answered question, with examples FDI from the evidence being the most common example used.

Question 2

Some students struggled to provide a logical explanation as to why subsidies might have been offered. Often a definition would be offered followed by an assertion that this would increase jobs without explaining how or why. Better responses were able to follow the chain of reasoning through and show why the Macedonian government was willing to do this.

Question 3

Unfortunately many candidates seized on the words 'joint venture' and produced a standard rehearsed piece that did not answer the actual question set. Better responses did specifically discuss how *Gazprom* and *JSC Elem* would benefit from the pipeline, for example that *Gazprom* would benefit from *JSC Elem's* local knowledge and that in turn *JSC Elem* might have learnt from the 'biggest energy company in the world'.

Question 4

Some candidates were able to discuss the relative merits and drawbacks for a small country such as Macedonia of joining a trade bloc and were duly rewarded. Other candidates failed to appreciate what this might mean or gave one sided answers which limited their marks.

Question 5

As with the January paper, this question was almost universally poorly answered. Very few candidates seemed to know just what actually meant. Most seemed to think it was some general 'catch-all' phrase that encompassed cheap/skilled labour, cheap raw materials, good infrastructure and any other potentially positive attribute. Unsurprisingly these students scored very low or no marks. Those few students that did clearly understand 'ease of doing business' and balanced the gains from this against other factors such as transport costs, labour costs, tax regimes, trade blocs and infrastructure were rewarded accordingly.

Question 6

As with Q3 many students produced a rehearsed answer that whilst being an accurate enough response did not contain any context or reference to a multinational such as *Unilever*. Evaluation was not always perceptive with students resorting to generic stock answers. Candidates should be aware that they must reinforce their answers with examples if they are to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Better responses did this, often using recent examples gained from wider reading and a broader understanding of the business world, as a result they deservedly scored higher marks.

Question 7

A reasonable number of students were able to answer this question well and made good use of the evidence and other examples to reinforce their arguments, with a pleasing number looking at the situation in both the short and long term. Other perceptive evaluative points concerned the potential actions of competitors and the wider economic climate.

For the students that did not do so well it was usually because they had simply copied out or re-written the evidence with little or no attempt at analysis or evaluation. Conclusions were rare indeed.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Do read the question carefully and answer the question that is set
- Do watch out for command words such as Assess or Evaluate
- Do use examples to illustrate your argument
- Do use the language of the subject and avoid generalities
- Do watch your timing and do not spend too long on one question
- Do write concisely
- Do add a conclusion to the longer questions

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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