



General Certificate of Education

Applied Business 8611/8613

BS04 Meeting Customer Needs

Report on the Examination

2008 examination - June series

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General Comments

This question paper was based around the motor and public transport industries. The first item looked specifically at Ford motors and in particular how they differentiate their most popular model, the Focus, to meet the needs of different customers. The second item then moved on to look at the car insurance industry and the way in which competitors in the market offer tailored policies to meet the needs of their target market. The information presented in this item proved very accessible for the majority of candidates. The final item combined a fictional case study in the form of Bob's Buses with government facts and figures. Interpretation of the latter proved more challenging for some candidates.

Question One

- (a) This question provided a relatively gentle introduction to the examination with the majority of candidates performing well. There were, however, occasions where candidates confused the two subheadings provided but still gave valid answers and were awarded for this.
- (b) Candidates were able to show good understanding of the term 'differentiation' and were able to relate this back to Item A. Stronger candidates were able to write in a logical manner and fully develop their response to identify the benefit to Ford and not just to the customer.
- (c) This question was generally completed well, particularly, by candidates who understood a range of aspects related to research and development (R&D). Candidates performed less well when they saw R&D as purely market research and, as a result, looked at using it to change aspects of the marketing mix.

Question Two

- (a) This proved a very straightforward question for the majority of candidates based on the amount of detail provided in the item.
- (b) This question provided an opportunity for stronger candidates to consider how the companies within the industry differentiated its products and even looked at relationships between policies. However, candidates who performed less well tended to take a list approach and be very descriptive in their response.
- (c) The focus for this question is on the customer service provided which was clearly identified by better performing candidates. Other candidates continued to focus on the differentiation of the product/policy options rather than customer service. Better candidates were also able to weigh up the importance of customer service in relation to other factors.

Question Three

- (a) Analysing how the research findings could help in deciding on a suitable option proved a more challenging question than those from Item A and Item B. Candidates often described the data rather than considered how it could be used, or how it could be used in relation to this scenario.
- (b) It was disappointing how many candidates failed to recognise or show understanding of secondary research. Many gave answers about primary research and the number of marks awarded was, therefore, limited.
- (c) Many candidates performed well here. Unfortunately, there were still candidates who failed to focus on the specific aspects of the research plan identified in the question. It was frustrating to see a large number of candidates talking about primary research methods rather than the data.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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