



**General Certificate of Education**

**Applied Business 8611/8613**

**BS10 Promotional Activities**

**Report on the Examination**

*2008 examination - June series*

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## General comments

It was pleasing to observe many centres getting to grips with the particular challenges set by the GCE Applied Business A2 portfolio units. Candidates from these centres had:

- set realistic problems to solve that were neither too complex nor too simplistic (Requirement A)
- carried out sufficient primary and secondary research to analyse the nature of the problem (Requirement C)
- developed practical solutions that addressed key parts of the problem (Requirements B and D).

As stated in last year's report, where candidates and centres struggled, it was nearly always the case that one or more of the above conditions were missing. In particular, when a mechanical approach was adopted which encouraged candidates to trawl through each unit's specification rather than selectively applying concepts to the problem at hand, the evidence was descriptive and failed to demonstrate the candidate's ability to solve realistic problems.

One particular feature of this round of moderation was the use of Unit 8 (Business Planning) by candidates as the context for Unit 9 (Marketing Strategy) and Unit 10 (Promotional Activities). When this promoted a coherent development of ideas, the tactic was successful and eminently sensible. However, sometimes this tactic resulted in a lack of development of ideas. In a number of cases, the evidence for Unit 9 or 10 was superficial and consisted of a re-hash of ideas present in the candidate's Unit 8 portfolio. Centres are advised that, when using Unit 8 as the context for linked units, they *must* ensure that candidates *develop* their initial ideas by carrying out further research and by presenting a coherent and detailed consideration of marketing tactics (Unit 9) or promotional activities (Unit 10).

Finally, a few words on the use of group work. It is entirely in the spirit of the GCE Applied Business to use group work as it encourages the development of key skills and helps reduce the burden of research. It is also a key component of Unit 14 (Managing Change). However, the following rules must be observed when assessing candidates' portfolios:

- each candidate must complete their own unique portfolio of evidence
- assessment decisions must be based on evidence produced solely by the candidate.

Unfortunately, albeit in a limited number of cases, some assessors were awarding marks using evidence which could not be attributed to a particular candidate. This left moderators in an intolerable position where they could not validate candidate evidence and could not support assessor decisions.

## **Assessment issues**

The quality of annotation improved and many more centres were using assessor feedback sheets to indicate where candidates had achieved the highest mark band within each assessment objective.

Where annotation was effective, assessors accurately indicated the Assessment Objectives and mark bands against key candidate evidence. This greatly assisted the moderation process and enabled moderators to provide focused feedback to centres.

Unfortunately, it is still the case that a significant proportion of centres are failing to annotate their candidates' portfolios and/or are misinterpreting the qualities required by the mark bands. It is of the utmost importance that assessors annotate candidate evidence by indicating both the assessment objective and the mark band next to key pieces of evidence e.g. AO3/MB2. It is also obviously important that the mark band standards, across the four assessment objectives, be understood by the team of assessors within a centre. Further guidance can be found on pages 22 to 27 of the Teachers' Guide, which can be downloaded from the AQA website.

The following comments on individual A2 units identify successful and less successful approaches to each unit by candidates.

### **BS10 - Promotional Activities**

This unit continues to produce some excellent examples of applied work. The contexts are varied - from school-based campaigns to local business organisations wanting to target different customer segments. Success usually comes from candidates:

- focusing on one or two promotional objectives
- sticking to a relatively small campaign budget (not much more than £2000)
- thinking carefully about the various components of the campaign.

The latter point is often the key to achieving high marks. Too many candidates continue to provide a very sketchy outline of the campaign. As they fail to consider the finer points of each promotional activity, and the ways these inter-relate, their grasp of how the campaign has the potential to achieve the promotional objective(s) is weak.

Another failing observed by moderators was very worrying. Several centres, and their candidates, did not differentiate between a promotional mix and a marketing mix. The evidence presented would often consider all aspects of the marketing mix and, inevitably, gave little consideration to the campaign's promotional activities.

However, when centres and candidates got it right, this unit had the capacity to enthuse candidates and reveal to them the reality of business practice.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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