



General Certificate of Education

Applied Business 8611/8613

BS04 Meeting Customer Needs

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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General Comments

Most students exhibited good subject knowledge on this paper. A key differentiator was the extent to which students drew on the context and used it to support their arguments. There were a number of students who opted to produce generic responses and ignored the material presented in the case study.

Question One

- (a) Most students were able to identify one relevant means of filling the gap in the market. A number of students failed to explain how this action could fill the gap in market by drawing on the evidence in the case study
- (b) This question attracted a full range of answers. Stronger students demonstrated understanding of the benefits of consumers having good product information, and continued to relate this to the circumstances of *Prêt a Manger*. Weaker answers failed to use the information in the text that distinguishes the company from its longer-established competitors.
- (c) Although this question elicited some high quality responses there were two common weaknesses in the answers of many students. A minority of students appeared unsure of the distinction between products and services and therefore could not address the question effectively. Others wrote in more general descriptive terms about the benefits of developing new services or, more commonly, new products. Better quality responses considered these issues for *Prêt a Manger*. Most students made some attempt at evaluation, with better ones using the context to support their justification by, for example, arguing that products are the key to customer satisfaction in the food industry.

Question Two

- (a) There were two major failings in students' answers to this question. Firstly, a disappointing proportion of students failed to draw on the information in the case study, despite the direction in the question and the obvious material that was available. This resulted in a generic answer to the question. Secondly, many students did not address how information technology could be used to **collect** the necessary data.
- (b) This question provided some interesting answers. Good responses focused on the advantages that might arise from the use of this data, for example having more appropriate opening hours. However, a number of students did not explain how the company could use the data that has been collected. Commonly, students described the data that the process might gather without considering its possible applications. Others opted to offer a number of potential uses without offering explanations. Once again, using the information in the case study was an essential element of a good quality answer.
- (c) There were some pleasing responses to this question. It was good to see students arguing that this was one way in which the company could meet the needs of its customers as well as the positive PR benefits that might arise from this process. Other students argued more generally about possible uses of feedback for the managers of a business.

Question Three

- (a) Although many students described elements of the characteristics of a 'Prêt Perfect' employee, a proportion lapsed into outlining the general benefits of motivated employees without considering the specific scenario. Only better students responded fully to the demands of the question and explained how the company might benefit from this type of employee.
- (b) Too many students simply drifted into a simple description of the company's processes. Many wrote at length about the silver star that is available to some employees, without considering the impact that this might have on performance and, crucially, linking it to the company's requirements in terms of the characteristics it requires in employees.
- (c) This was a challenging question but, nonetheless, many students made good progress with it. Most students recognised the importance of motivated employees and better responses considered this in the context of a retail business where many employees have direct contact with customers. It was disappointing that a significant proportion of students did not really attempt to draw evaluative conclusions, despite the wording of the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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