



General Certificate of Education

Applied Business 8616/8619

BS12 Managing People

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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General Comments

It is pleasing to report that the paper clearly differentiated between students with a wide range of marks being awarded both for each question and for the paper overall.

Some centres continue to teach this unit very well, with their students being able to tackle the full range of the specification. These students have also been clearly taught skills in analysis and are able to make firm conclusions supported by robust analysis.

In the longer evaluative (12 mark) questions, students must focus on developing in-depth answers. A basic description type answer only scores Level 1 marks and maybe a quality of written communication mark - giving a score of 2 out of 12. To secure higher marks, students must apply, analyse and make judgements on the likely outcomes in the case study. In this paper this was a particular issue with question 3(d).

It is really pleasing to see the very mature answers some students are now producing which show the ability to look beyond the 'obvious' answer, and to explore the wider impacts of the changes proposed. This shows a depth of understanding of the subject and must also demonstrate exceptional teaching of this subject in some centres.

Very few students failed to complete the paper, suggesting that the length of paper was appropriate for the time allowed.

Question One

- (a) (i) Most students did correctly identify the key features of a participative leadership style, but for two marks they needed to develop their answer which several failed to do.
- (a) (ii) Virtually all students scored at least a Level 1 response on the benefits of a participative style, but to get to Level 2 students also needed to use the item and apply this to the case study. Whilst most did make an attempt at application, students do need to ensure that they address the question directly, in this case the benefits to the business, not the staff.
- (b) This question was well answered by most students with the majority reaching at least Level 2. More complete answers needed students to analyse why the depot managers specifically would be concerned about the changes to consultation in the business.
- (c) This question specifically asked whether Ben's assurance would work in rebuilding the confidence of the depot managers. Whilst most students made a good attempt at the question and were able to identify many of the factors involved, only the better students really answered the question giving a supported judgement as to whether Ben's assurance would work.

Question Two

- (a) Most students understood that adding an extra layer to the organisational structure would affect communication flow and were able to describe the impact it might have. For full Level 2 marks, students needed to explain the impact on communication within the business, and some students stopped short of doing this despite writing very long answers.
- (b) It was disappointing that a minority of students did not appear to understand what a strategic decision was and wrote extensively about staff management or similar subjects. For those who did understand the term, many could have improved their answers by applying their analysis to the case study, ie what it is about the position the business found itself in which necessitated more attention being paid to strategic management. Several students also wasted time on this question by answering question 2(c) (about Zeenat's position) in their answer and then repeated it for the subsequent question.
- (c) Most students are now used to the need to make a judgement in these longer questions and only very few failed to make at least a basic assessment of whether Zeenat was right or not. Many students could improve their answer by reaching a firm conclusion at the end of their answers. In several cases they have taken on board the need to debate and present both sides of the argument so well that they never actually say which side of the argument they agree with.

Question Three

- (a) Most students could correctly identify the type of decision which was being made.
- (b) This question was answered quite poorly by many students, who often wrote about issues including leadership styles, actions which could be taken and the need to promote other staff. This often deviated from the actual question asked which was whether their expert power would work in the new larger business, and answers therefore needed to be more clearly focused on power.
- (c) This question produced a wide range of answers. One key issue is that some students believed that because the business was not building something, CPA could not possibly be relevant to them. CPA is a tool to manage multiple tasks which have to be completed within time and cost constraints. The need to share resources (machines) between multiple businesses in the item provides a classic challenge for which CPA could be suitable. It is also concerning that students persist in writing that because time estimates are not likely to be 100% correct that CPA will automatically fail. CPA does allow projects to be replanned, and the line of argument that you should not plan because of unreliable estimates could be applied to all planning techniques. Even plans based on poor estimates are normally better than not planning at all.
- (d) This question was answered at a basic level by virtually all students. However, as a 12 mark question, students must learn to develop their answers more. Simply listing a whole series of actions which could be taken, but failing to develop any of them so as to explain why they would work, what benefits they would deliver and making a judgement on how successful they would be in addressing the issues in the business will inevitably result in students being held back to low marks. For higher marks students must show the ability to make judgements and apply their answers fully.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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