



**General Certificate of Education**

**Applied Business 8610**

**AS Portfolio Units**

**Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - June series*

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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## General Comments

Many cases of evidence are being presented in a variety of formats from centres, for example using newspaper articles and leaflets, which make the portfolios interesting and meaningful. In addition, there was evidence of centres making use of contacts and visits to organisations that enabled students to focus on a genuine application of the specification criteria.

In terms of assessment, many centres are now annotating work where they find evidence of the assessment criteria, and this is a great aid to the moderator. This annotation indicated where assessment objectives (AO) and mark bands (MB) had been achieved, eg using a notation such as AO3/MB2.

It is most helpful to have detailed feedback sheets to indicate how assessment decisions had been reached. These are not obligatory but they help both assessors and moderators to assess the qualities exhibited by students in their portfolios.

Finally, before considering individual units, it was apparent that there was some over-assessment of A04 across all the units. In general, for AO4, MB3 and MB4 were being awarded without evidence that students had considered countervailing arguments, eg by carrying out a SWOT analysis to provide a basis from which a supported judgement may be arrived at.

### BS01 – Investigating Business

Many students chose a range of different businesses, both profit and not-for-profit organisations, which enabled full coverage of the evidence requirements. These tended to be local businesses. In contrast, over-reliance on the internet site of a large business (eg Tesco) tended to encourage descriptive work that failed to be applied, analytical or evaluative. If a large business is investigated then the focus should be on a local branch.

Centres are reminded that this unit should be based on each candidate carrying out an investigation into the actual marketing activities implemented by the chosen business. This should be a practical activity applying, rather than describing, theories about the marketing mix. This observation also applies to the other two aspects of the unit, ie enterprise skills and teamwork. Listing the generic skills of entrepreneurs or copying out a theoretical table of Belbin's team members does not encourage investigation.

There are still occasions when students looked at 'whether' instead of 'how' objectives were met when tackling requirement D. Students should focus on how marketing activities, enterprising behaviour and teamwork have contributed to achieving the business's objectives.

### BS02 – People in Business

Many centres had carefully considered the practical implications of the role-play interviews. These centres provided students with the opportunity to address requirements B, C and D in an investigative way. Centres are reminded that requirement A should consider the same business investigated in requirements B, C and D.

In terms of assessment, there does appear to be some confusion on achievement of the higher mark bands for A02. These require students to 'target issues with precision'. This could be through an explanation of essential and desirable characteristics on the person specification and how these can be established through the recruitment process. Alternatively, there could be an explanation of the questions being planned for interview and how these specifically relate to key aspects of the person specification.

Further examples include:

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- key considerations in the job advertisement
- how students are being motivated to apply
- what information has been included and why this might be important
- the decision on where to advertise and why.

All of these examples are ways in which the candidate might provide evidence towards the higher mark bands on AO2. Production of documentation from scratch is not essential, nor would it help students to achieve the higher mark bands.

Finally, with A04, the judgement should be based on the candidate's own recruitment exercise, rather than attempting to make judgements on the business's recruitment process. Students should suggest and justify improvements to their own recruitment and selection process.

### **BS06 – Developing a Product**

It is clear that where students performed well in this unit, they were tending to focus on small-scale product ideas. This enabled them to understand and produce comprehensive evidence in terms of the resource decisions and costing information. Requirement A, expects students to look at a business producing a similar product to their own, eg if they are proposing to develop an item of clothing, they should consider a suitable manufacturer or retailer of clothing.

There are still instances occurring where centres are requiring students to produce business rather than product ideas. The focus of this unit is on the development of a product. Assignments should be reflecting this requirement. Using complex products or asking for development of business ideas limits the candidate's ability to produce higher quality evidence in this unit.

### **BS07 – Career Planning**

There was evidence of effective work from centres and most are clearly distinguishing between three different career pathways rather than narrowly focusing on one. Good evidence was produced to match the choice of pathway and route following clear and logical progression. The one area that could be improved upon is the production of a career action plan. This should incorporate students' research findings and demonstrate a logical development for the students in achieving their selected pathways and routes. The coherence of the career plan is lost without a suitable action plan to logically tie elements together and to develop a suitable route for students. In order to achieve the higher mark bands within A02, there needs to be evidence of targeting issues with precision, for instance, tying in key aspects of the research into the job requirements and of their personal characteristics to produce a realistic and coherent career plan.

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

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