



**General Certificate of Education (A-level) Applied
June 2011**

Applied Business

BSPA/1

**(Specification
8611/8613/8616/8617/8619)**

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

It was pleasing to see examples of centres focusing their investigations on local businesses. As referenced in previous reports, local investigations help students to gain access to the information they require and allow them to demonstrate an applied understanding of each unit's content. In addition, as they had a good understanding of what it was they were investigating, these students often demonstrated analysis and judgement with far greater facility than students investigating less focused contexts.

Assessment Issues

Centres are reminded that clear annotation of portfolios by assessors is a key part of reaching accurate assessment decisions. It is very difficult to make these decisions without identifying where students have reached their highest level of performance for each assessment objective. Taking Unit 1 as an example, where a student has demonstrated a thorough explanation of how a marketing activity helps the business to achieve an objective, the annotation 'AO2/MB4' should be used.

When reaching a decision on the mark to be awarded for an assessment objective, the assessor should review the highest level reached and consider the extent to which all aspects of that level's descriptor have been evidenced. If the evidence shows coverage of most aspects at that assessment level, then the higher marks in the range should be awarded, eg for AO2 at MB4 this would be 21 or 22 marks. If only one main aspect has been evidenced at that level, then the lower marks in the range should be awarded, eg for AO2 at MB4 this would be 17 or 18 marks. The middle marks in a mark band's range are to be used in the remaining cases.

BS01 – Investigating Business

Most centres seem to have a good understanding of requirement A (covering AO1). Successful students provided a clear description of the business's aims and objectives and went on to succinctly describe how the external environment has impacted on achieving these aims and objectives. Less successful students adopted a theoretical approach to this requirement, ie the responses were too general.

It was pleasing to see several good examples of students carrying out effective research and analysis into the ways in which their business's had used marketing activities, enterprise skills and teams (requirement C, AO3). This analysis was often focussed and helped each student to gain insights into how the business's activities helped to achieve the aims and objectives identified in requirement A.

Some centres struggled with their interpretation of requirement B (covering AO2). In a number of cases, centres and/or students described the marketing activities, enterprise skills or use of teams without reference to the business's aims and objectives. This made any assessment decisions at MB3 or MB4 difficult to support.

It was pleasing to see very few examples of centres misinterpreting requirement D (covering AO4). Nearly all students correctly understood that they were being asked to judge which of the activities, covered in requirement B, best supported the achievement of the business's aims and objectives. When local and smaller scale businesses were investigated, students found it much easier to take on this requirement. When large scale and remote businesses were investigated, demonstrating effective judgement was more difficult.

BS02 – People in Business

Most centres appear to have a good understanding of requirement A (A01). Successful students carried out interviews with the employees in the three job roles to gather the information required. This ‘first-hand’ contact helped students to describe, in their own words, the job roles, responsibilities and qualities that each employee needs to demonstrate. Less successful students often provide generic descriptions or failed to go beyond simply reiterating the information they had been given.

Requirement B continues to pose difficulties for centres and students. Whilst the interview section is done well, too many students restrict themselves to simply presenting their recruitment and interview documentation. In order to access the higher mark bands within AO2, and AO3 and AO4, students need to thoroughly explain the purpose and structure of the documentation and interview. For example they could explain:

- the purpose of the interview questions and how they target key aspects of the person specification
- why certain questions were not asked, demonstrating their understanding of the legal aspects within the process
- key aspects of the person specification, why they are required for the job role and how they intend to test for these aspects within the recruitment and interview process.

It is this participation in the process, as interviewers, which enable students to begin to gain a true understanding of the concepts involved. This active involvement then allows access to the higher mark bands within AO3 and AO4.

BS06 – Developing a Product

It was very pleasing to see some interesting and successful evidence produced by students this year. It was apparent that these students had enjoyed carrying out their investigations into product development.

This unit works well when students keep their product development to ideas that could be implemented on a very small scale. Students face immense difficulties when they focus on ideas that require larger scale operations, such as electronic products, eg MP3 players. It should be noted that this unit is about developing a product and not a business plan. There are still too many instances of centres providing assignment tasks that encourage students to produce aspects of a business plan, eg forecasted sales or marketing plans. This is inappropriate and makes it very difficult for students to access the higher marks bands, especially in AO1 when they fail to consider a business producing a product similar to their own.

BS07 – Career Planning

This is done well by most centres and students clearly enjoy the relevance of the task to their future. Successful students made a real effort to investigate possible job choices, and integrated their research to come up with a comprehensive career plan that was realistic and suitable to their individual background. Less successful students chose career pathways that were inappropriate or unrealistic, making it very difficult for them to evidence analysis and supported judgement.

It was worrying to see a number of centres that had set tasks requiring students to investigate a very wide range of jobs within the 3 different career pathways. This meant that requirement A occupied a large proportion of the portfolio and stifled analysis and evaluation. In some cases, students developed career plans for all three pathways. This is not required and students should focus on one career pathway when developing their 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.

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