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Examiners' Report January 2008

GCE

GCE Applied Business (8721/8722/9721/9722)

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General Comments

The structure of the question paper was based on replicating Assessment Objective (AO) and Mark Band (MB) weightings established in previous papers and in line with standard set by Specimen Paper. In this way the requirements of the question paper should be directly comparable with previous years.

It is recommended that in addition to reading and taking any notes or advice from this report that Examiner Reports for previous series are read as they contain lots of general advice that is still relevant and likely to be useful for staff and students in preparation for future papers.

General observations about this paper are as follows:

Previous reports have noted that many candidates do not seem to be familiar with the command words being used throughout the paper. I am pleased to report that there appears to be some improvement in this situation. Although the command words are still misinterpreted by some candidates, in general, the answers produced reflect the requirements of the question.

To continue this improvement, and to aid candidates in the future, I would still recommend that:

1) Teachers make good use of the induction session developed to introduce students to some of the command words that they will commonly see within the GCE assessment: Appendix 8, in the Teacher's Guide that accompanies the Edexcel AS GCE and GCE specifications for Applied Business, May 2005.

2) Past papers and Markschemes are used to identify how command words relate to mark allocation and exemplar answers.

Despite improved understanding and use of command words, many of the answers produced by candidates still show that they are missing some of the precise wording and information given in the stem of the questions. As a result, candidates may produce long and well developed answers based on the first subject that they see – rather than what has been asked in the question. Most of these answers are therefore inappropriate, and consequently incorrect. This problem may occur simply through misreading, not a problem exclusive to this paper, or it could be that some words become invisible to candidates who want to get down as much as they know about a subject in the heat of the exam room. Again, missing a key word that defines a precise requirement within the question/answer during their scan/reading of the question results in missed marks.

To help overcome this problem, advise candidates to read each question thoroughly before starting to write their answer; then to read back their answer and to check that this meets the wording/requirement of the question – if it does not, they then have an opportunity to correct or re-write an answer.

There is a growing tendency for candidates to write out the question as the start to their answer, sometimes their entire answer. This may help their thought process but will not score any marks unless the question explicitly asks for the answer to be drawn from information given in the question or scenario.

The open nature of the last two items in each question, based on a candidate's own choice of business or area of study, clearly works well for some candidates. However, for weaker candidates it can result in a page of generalisations or no marks at all is they fail to spot the key words that define each question. As in previous years there were a lot of 'politicians answers' e.g. when asked to write about how their chosen business has responded to consumer protection legislation, candidates produced answers based on any legislation that they happened to be familiar with and confident to write about. Unfortunately, no matter how well written or thorough the answer, unless it related directly to consumer protection legislation for example (where there is quite a wide range available to choose) no marks could be given.

The 'open' questions also continue to confuse candidates who chose inappropriate organisations or examples. It is good advice to candidates to read the question before they choose a business to write about, so that they can consider which of the business that they have studied is most appropriate and which will produce the best answer.

The fundamental requirement of the 'open' questions is that they are based on a real business that the candidate has studied or learned about during their course. Thus they are expected to name the business and give a brief outline of its main activities, to provide context for the marking of their answer. It is surprising how many candidates do not bother to name a business, but just launch straight into an answer. If a business is not named, and cannot be identified by direct naming within the answer, then no marks can be given as the answer could be based on pure fiction. Please remind candidates that it is most important to name the business about which they are writing.

This report is designed to help future teaching and learning. It may come across as a critique of the ability of candidates, but it should not be interpreted as being unduly negative. Judging from the papers and answers seen, most candidates have indeed worked hard on their studies and the paper is just designed to give candidates the opportunity of demonstrating, within the terms of the Assessment Objectives for this Unit, just how much they have learned. I offer my congratulations to all students, whatever grade they may ultimately achieve.

The theme of this paper was based on an insurance and pensions company *Wellingley Life plc.* (*WL*). Whilst few, if any, of the candidates will have had direct, first-hand experience of such a business it did not seem to have caused any problems with understanding of the application of business principles.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

1a) A relatively straightforward question to start paper. Most answers were drawn directly from statements in the scenario, identifying evidence as requested, demonstrating. The second mark for applying the evidence to *WL* proved more difficult to access for some candidates. Despite the fact that the scenario preceding the question contained only 71 words, there was a lot of apparent misreading. The most obvious example of this was taking general information about the insurance and pensions industry to be explicit information about *WL*, the business in the question. As an aside, from the given answers, there was little evidence that any candidate who dropped 'labour-intensive' into their answers had any idea what it means – an indication that there is scope for learning some of the basic business terminology.

1b) Question asked for two ways that the financing of *WL* is likely to influence how it operates. The need for 'two' ways was not always noticed, losing half the possible marks. There was a lot of use of the general term 'stakeholders' as a source of finance, which, given the range of options for finance, is not good enough. How financing influences how a business operates was not always clear, with confusion between 'financing' i.e. raising money and 'finance' as a business function. From given answers there is an apparently widespread misunderstanding that plc's are owned and financed by the government, a literal interpretation of the 'public' in 'public limited company', and that because of the word 'limited' there is no risk to the investors. More basic terminology that needs to be learned.

1c) Question asked for business aims for two different stakeholders. Aims for customers produced generally good answers. There was some vagueness and generalisation, but most showed some understanding. Aims for the local community were also quite well written, but some candidates got carried away with general environmental issues rather than aims that were strictly local.

1d) A six mark question aimed at AO3 and AO4, which gave candidates plenty of scope for their answer. Overall, quite a successful question, candidates could select features of the given pay structure that applied to motivation, and most had something to say to explain how they worked as motivators. Some weaker candidates based their answers on benefits to *WL* rather than sticking to the subject of motivation. Pleased to report that some of the stronger candidates supported their answers by quoting motivational theories.

1e) The question required candidates to apply what they had been told about the pay structure at *WL*, before Q1d), to the two stated objectives. Answers produced lots of basic understanding, but a low level of application from most candidates. A proportion of candidates simply defined what was meant by the objectives, rather than answer the actual question.

1f) This was the first question based on candidates own studies. Answers should have been based directly on named functions, working together, in the context of chosen business. There were marks available for how functions work together, and marks for how working together contributes to the success of chosen business. Lots of very general answers. Many simply gave job descriptions for people working in two disparate functions, with no suggestion of how they might work together. Consequently, although two functions may have been identified there was little scope for achieving marks for how their working together contributed to the success of the business. Judging by some answers, there is far from universal understanding of the basic term 'function' or 'functional areas' in the context of a business.

1g) Candidates were asked to choose and name the title of a manager, supervisor or employee in a chosen business, state the responsibility that goes with the role, and analyse how carrying out the responsibility contributes to the success of the chosen business. Many candidates answered this question by starting with a virtual job description for the role that they have chosen – within this description the responsibilities may have been explicit or implied by elements of the job description. However, there seemed to be quite good understanding of some of the responsibilities that went with different job roles. Accessing the AO3 marks for analysis proved more difficult for all but the strongest candidates. An example of good knowledge, but a weakness in being able to apply that knowledge to a given situation.

Question 2

2a) Superficially a straightforward and easy question, but marks could only be given if the item selected related directly to a person specification, as stated clearly in the question. Although it may have been easy for most candidates, some missed the point that they needed to use the information given in the scenario, and simply defined what is meant by a 'person specification'.

2bi) Question asked for a description of how holding appraisal interviews will help contribute to the efficiency of work in *WL*. Overall most answers showed good understanding of the reasons for appraisal interviews. Many candidates again found it difficult to apply the appraisal method to its contribution to efficiency. As a result there was lots of repetition of what was written in the stem of the question. This question is a good example of where some candidates scan the question, spot something they know about – appraisal - then write about it, rather than answering the question. Answers had to be based on contribution to efficiency, however defined or implied, not the features or benefits of the appraisal process.

2bii) In this question candidates needed to provide suggestions for how the appraisal process described could be changed in order to further improve work efficiency at *WL*. Most candidates had no problems identifying a change, the difficulty was to then explain how this change would improve work efficiency.

2biii) Question asked for an outline of one benefit and one drawback from using the current appraisal process as a method to establish training needs. Lots of candidates missed the focus of this question i.e. '…to establish training needs'. This is another example of a question where candidates tended to just read and base their answer on the first line, rather than reading the question in its entirety. Consequently answers tended to repeat the generic benefits or drawbacks of appraisal. Some gave benefits and drawbacks of training per se. Few linked the two, as required.

2c) This question was based on describing the benefits of off-the-job training for updating employees on new legislation. Candidates showed good understanding of the features of off-the-job training. More difficult was to describe why it was suitable in the given situation. Another example of candidates having good knowledge, but an inability to then transfer and apply that knowledge to a real situation.

2d) Question required candidates to examine two personal qualities that would be looked for in a person carrying out a job role that they had selected from a business that they had studied. Some very good answers, which showed that candidates understood the meaning of 'personal qualities'. Equally good understanding of why the personal qualities they had given would be looked for in the selected job role. Sometimes it was a fine line between 'personal qualities' rather than a learned skill, but answers showed lots of good application, which was rewarded.

2e) Another question based on a business chosen by the candidate. They were asked to analyse the impact that the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations had on their chosen business. This seems to have been quite a challenging question, and whilst candidates may have understood the main point of the legislation many candidates found it difficult to identify, let alone analyse, any 'impact' that this legislation may have had on their chosen business. There was lots of rewriting of the question, lots of defining 'discrimination' in all of its forms, but not necessarily answering the question. More worrying was the in-built age prejudice in many of the answers – lots of age stereotyping (young as well as old) and a casual ageism in many answers, which suggests that a law such as this will assume even greater importance in the future.

Question 3

3a) To introduce this question, candidates were given the aims of the call centre at *WL* and a list of targets that *WL* has set its call centre operators. Candidates were then asked to explain how the targets might conflict with the given aims. Candidates were quite good at identifying areas of potential conflict. There was also some good analysis of the likely consequences of the conflict

3b) Candidates were told that as a result of plans to move the call centre abroad there was the possibility of compulsory redundancies at *WL*. Question asked why the threat of compulsory redundancies might demotivate some employees but motivate others. There were six marks available for this question and candidates were expected to answer from both sides of the given situation. Most candidates could understand and identify basic reasons for demotivation and motivation in the workforce. Better candidates gave fuller explanations in their outline and accessed more of the marks. Full marks could only be achieved if factors for both demotivation and motivation were outlined.

3c) Straightforward definition of 'ethical behaviour' required for marks. Although simple to ask, this question proved to be surprisingly difficult for the majority of candidates. Although a basic but important term for anyone hoping to gain employment, it does not appear to be understood very well, which is somewhat disconcerting. There were so many different 'definitions' that it would suggest that most answers were just guesses, rather than having been definitely taught what ethical behaviour means, another worry for the future of business. Lots of candidates gave examples with no definition. For some reason many defined unethical behaviour. A significant proportion confused 'ethical' with 'ethnic' and proceeded to give definitions based on discrimination.

3d) Answered much better than 3c) this question was indeed based on stating the likely business effects of unethical behaviour on *WL*. Candidates showed good understanding of the effects, and produced long and full answers, no doubt helped by the high profile reporting of public reaction to the problems at the Northern Rock Bank in the lead-up to the examination.

3e) Candidates were given the opening statement from *WL*'s Corporate Social Responsibility Statement. They were then asked to list four appropriate areas that *WL* should cover in its Corporate Social Responsibility Policy, to meet the promises made in the opening statement. This proved to be a very difficult question. Many candidates simply repeated the words from the given statement, rather than turning elements of the statement into areas or headings to be included within the Policy. Most candidates missed the fact that it was a 'Social Responsibility' policy, and just listed generic headings that would appear in any general business report. It is difficult to advise how candidates should best prepare for questions like this, other than to read the question very carefully and check that the answer given actually relates to what has been asked.

3f) Question asked candidates how their chosen business has responded to two relevant pieces of consumer protection legislation. Judging by answers, legislation in general is not an area well-known or understood by candidates, and that consumer protection legislation specifically is even less well-known. Candidates seemed to be writing about any legislation that they happened to have heard about. There were many answers related to employment legislation, which would suggest that candidates were not differentiating consumers from employees, something that really does need to be addressed. The Trading Standards website http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/ is an excellent source for very accessible and easily understood information about consumer protection legislation.

3g) This final question asked candidates to discuss the effectiveness of their chosen business in retaining its employees. There were six marks available giving candidates scope to discuss this issue, crossing AO2, AO3 and AO4. Most candidates could give examples of how the business retained its employees, but few could discuss the effectiveness of the examples that they had given, thus missing out on four of the six marks. Another example of having the knowledge, but an inability to apply that knowledge to a real-life situation. There was some misreading and subsequent confusion between ‘retaining employees’ and ‘retraining employees’

6917 - Investigating Business

Administration:

Most centres used the required front mark sheets. There was little evidence in this window of centres producing their own.

There was little evidence of standardisation across assessors, however most centres only had one assessor per unit.

The majority of centres submitted portfolios by the deadline, a number sending them early before the start of the Christmas holidays.

Annotation of Portfolio Work

Centres are required to annotate portfolios as given in the Code of Practice, identifying where a candidate's evidence of criteria coverage may be found in the work. Many Centres did this but there were many examples where little or no annotation was evident and moderators had to try to identify where and how marks had been awarded. Other centres annotated by assessment objective, however this does not show how the marks are being allocated to the strands and mark bands.

The recommendation is to annotate by reference to "Mark Band" achieved and "Area" covered e.g. MB1a, MB2b etc. Clear annotation supports the candidates as well as internal standardisation and external moderation processes.

Assessment

Overall the standard of assessment continues to improve. Staff from centres have attended INSET events, have sought advice and had questions sent to Edexcel answered and having entered candidates in previous windows have received external moderator feedback.

A number of centres leniently assessed the unit.

Assessment Objectives and Mark Band Evidence

The choice of type of business to investigate is vital to the achievement of this unit. Candidates are required to investigate the setting up of a small business which provides a service to the local area.

Candidates should not investigate a business that currently exists.

There was evidence of some candidates using an existing business or case study of an existing business rather than investigating setting up their own small business; however the majority did make the correct decision
The business should be small but have a range of physical, financial and human resources to enable strand B to be achieved. Additionally, the business should be one that the candidate would be running as a full time business and not an out of school, evenings and weekend activity. An after school, weekend or holiday business would not generate sufficient evidence to demonstrate the application of the candidate's knowledge and understanding or to achieve all strands.

Strand A: Some centres devised assignments that did not fully cover all aspects of this strand in that some centres directed their candidates to cover the wrong type of business whilst some centres directed candidates to provide only a description of a small number of competitors in order to cover the market research and analysis aspect whilst some omitted this aspect. Some centres produced assignments briefs that did not fully cover this theme or restricted answers to mark band 1 or 2.

As part of the market research, questionnaires were usually used but in some cases the sample used did not reflect the target market for the product/ service. Once the questionnaires were completed, candidates often produced graphs of the results and described the results but did not analyse the outcomes. Secondary research was usually very limited. Many candidates did not make any further reference to this market research or use it as a base for decisions about the product/service or business. Work was often in mark band 1.

The work presented for the remaining area of the strand was sometimes generic and not applied to the business being investigated.

The other aspects of strand A were stakeholders, aims and legal aspects. Candidates often gave generic aims and objectives that were not SMART. Stakeholders were covered but again the answers were generic. For legal aspects, candidates usually only covered the ownership of the business. The work was often basic and the wider legal aspect related to taxation, VAT, consumer legislation and food handling, processing and sales were rarely covered and so work tended to be in mark band 1. Prices were often given but pricing policy was rarely discussed beyond simple statements of being cheaper than competitors.

In **strand B**, candidates often gave theoretical answers to “quality”. Quality statements were often “an afterthought/ bolt on” and not linked to other resources. Small businesses were often planning to inappropriately implement TQM.

Financial resources were often only briefly covered. Candidates tended to list, and in some cases, explain the range of financial resources and their sources but did not justify their choice of finance. Many candidates covered personal loans rather than business ones. Often financial resources were not appropriate to the business. Physical resources were often listed without reference to costing, availability and importance. Candidates often produced pages of downloaded images with some descriptive detail. Premises were often not covered or the use of the candidate’s own home was identified. In the later case, there was rarely any payment towards utilities evident in either strand B or C.

Some candidates did not cover human resources simply stating that the business did not employ staff. Such work cannot be awarded marks and candidates must be guided to investigate businesses that have some staff requirements. A number of candidates produced pages of theoretical work on recruitment and selection, motivation, etc.

Candidates did not give clear evidence of capacity, i.e. opening hours, number of staff, sales patterns per day/per week.

Strands A and, in particular, B should be used to provide evidence of costs, capacity and sales for the financial documents in strand C.

For **strand C**, candidates usually calculated cash flow and breakeven but the monitoring aspects were rarely covered. Candidates could not always explain what they were doing or how they arrived at the figures. Candidates often described the cash flow and breakeven but could not explain how these were used to monitor the performance of their business. Candidates in some centres simply produced a range of financial documents without any explanations. There was little linking back to research in strand A or to costs and amounts, e.g. employees/ hours, of resources in strand B. Again work was often limited to mark band 1. This strand was leniently assessed in a number of cases, however, many candidates did well on this strand. Where candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of finance and financial monitoring, this strand was usually done well and appropriately assessed.

In a number of centres, candidates did not explicitly select or describe start up and running costs.

Strand D was often treated as an "add on" and was rarely linked to the business. There was over concentration on generic software, usually Office, with little on specialised software. Where covered, the specialist software was often accounting packages and these were often inappropriate to the size of the business. Some candidates did effectively use Publisher and other DTP packages as specialist. Candidates tended to describe the use of word processing for letters, databases for customer records and spreadsheets for accounts, however specific examples in relation to their own business were often omitted.

6918 - Investigating Marketing

Administration:

Most of the work was again submitted together with the appropriate forms – Mark Record Sheets (“MRS”) and “OPTEMS” although not all were fully signed to indicate authenticity and this sometimes had to be requested separately. In general, marks on the work conformed to those on the OPTEMS with occasional discrepancies.

Where Centres design their own “front sheets” it is important to ensure that all the relevant information is present ie candidate and Centre name and number, Centre marks, moderator marks, assessor’s and candidate’s signatures and, where relevant, of internal moderation or internal standardisation

The work submitted again demonstrated similar approaches in content and style from earlier series. Assessment seen was generally consistent with some evidence of leniency and assessment in much of the work around or just outside the limits of tolerance. There were a few instances where assessment was found to be harsh.

Some of the work seen appeared to be re-submitted from June 2007. Where this was the case it was usually difficult to know what changes had been made and Centres are advised to indicate what improvements have been made to work that is re-submitted.

Most work was again received on time although there were again instances where Centres received Moderators’ details late and some candidate work was also sent late by Centres.

Annotation of Portfolio Work

The minimum requirement for annotation of portfolios is laid down in the Code of Practice to be identification of where a candidate’s evidence of criteria coverage may be found in the work. Many Centres provided this but there were still too many examples where little or no annotation was evident and moderators were left trying to identify where and how marks had been awarded. The recommendation to annotate by reference to “Mark Band” achieved and “Area” covered eg MB1a, MB2b etc is currently still not being followed by some Centres but, however this is done, it is worth emphasising again the importance of clear annotation and internal standardisation for the benefit of candidates as well as for external moderation purposes.

Presentation of Portfolio Work

One major concern still remains the inaccessibility and unsuitable presentation of many of the portfolios with work either tightly packed into plastic wallets (that split on opening), left in ring binders or clipped into plastic folders (this simply makes the process of extracting the work more laborious than should be the case). The preferred format is loose-leaf or treasury-tagged sheets that can be easily opened and read.

General Issues

Slightly less evidence was presented of the largely "academic" approach ie candidates producing masses of theory on sampling or pricing and more evidence of the required "applied" approach where the assessment requirement is more directly met in a practical way through a suitable choice of product or service.

In the cases of the best work an integrated approach was apparent with the choice of product or service justified by careful research from several sources that, in turn, informed the final choice of marketing mix. Weaker approaches were still found where candidates tried to launch or re-launch a whole range of products or services (sometimes a complete business or brand) and this made for real difficulties when detailed consideration of the "mix" was attempted eg it was difficult to come up with effective pricing when candidates often regurgitated pricing theory to cover a range without arriving at any actual prices.

As with "Investigating Business" in Unit 2, the best approach was when candidates took simple products or services and came up with practical suggestions for a suitable marketing mix that incorporated a clear idea of product, price, promotion and place (distribution) ie the "4P's" (or some variation) linked clearly to the market research. Weaker work underestimated eg the costs of promotion and advertising and made assumptions about budgets that would be unsustainable in reality. This emphasised again the need for clear, simple ideas, costs and prices. In the best cases, candidates were able to produce eg mock-ups of advertising and promotional campaigns as part of the mix and these added to the whole approach.

Areas of the Specification:

It is worth remembering that each section of this Unit is directed towards a specific Assessment Objective so that, for instance, (a) requires demonstration of knowledge and understanding (AO1); (b) concerns research and findings (AO3) and so on.

(a) Where candidates had been required to investigate the market, brand, range or some generic product rather than a particular product or service this made for difficulties of analysis. Often, the actual product or service itself was not well explained (candidate and assessor assuming it too obvious to require any explanation) and marks were lost as a consequence. Where candidates had been guided to a clear choice, the outcome was usually better. What is needed is a clear description of the product or service with reasons given for the choices made and for the marketing objectives, segmentation and target market to be clearly explained as well. There is no need to make the (assignment) brief too elaborate, candidates tend to become distracted by other issues eg product design and lose sight of the requirements of the specification as a result. Better work demonstrated a clearer linkage of the product to the marketing objectives, segmentation and the target market together with some justification for these, raising the possibility of marks in Band 3. Often, all that was needed was for the candidate to add the word "because" together with suitable reasoning to allow the higher marks to be earned.

(b) In the best work there was again good evidence of suitable research both primary and secondary as the basis for much of the unit coverage. Candidates sometimes spent too long explaining "research" in theory and, in some cases, there was too much theory (often of "sampling" itself), restricted sampling and little linkage to the research when the marketing mix was later discussed. Where candidates had investigated a wider range of sources (including interviews with relevant people and the use of focus groups) and then linked their analysis to the target market and segmentation highlighted in (a) above coverage tended to be fuller. Sometimes primary data was too restricted or inappropriate eg conclusions based on a sample of 5; or a product targeted at 16-20 year olds based on a survey of older adults! Stronger candidates were able to use good research findings to link analysis to the target market identified above or as a basis for a different target market altogether.

(c) Candidates were again able to discuss the appropriate “P’s” but higher marks arose where these were developed through links to research findings (from (b)) especially in relation to the target market/segment identified in (a) above. Much theory was also in evidence with weaker candidates failing to apply this to the chosen mix. The “mix” was too often buried in a mass of discussions about the business or buried in theory eg of “pricing” and it was difficult to always find out eg what actual price(s) would be suggested. One improvement in this area would arise where the reasons and justification for links between the elements of the chosen mix are fully explained. Sometimes, (c) was done in isolation to the (extensive) research findings that could have informed the “4 P’s” so much better and more clearly. In many cases candidates had been encouraged to use marketing tools such as the Boston Matrix, Ansoff and many applied these to the mix in an attempt at justification. In reality, the nature of the choice of product or service often rendered discussion of these tools largely irrelevant since they would more commonly apply in the case of larger, multi-product businesses.

(d) Evaluation needs to be of the individual components of the suggested mix rather than just of the (nature of) the chosen product or service as was sometimes the case. Better, more specific evaluations arose where candidates used relevant “SWOT” and/or “PEST”- style approaches (and their variations) and applied these to the components of the mix identified in (c). In some cases, evaluation occurred throughout the work and in the weaker cases simple, unjustified statements were much in evidence and the whole was more about the tasks or assignment (and how these could be improved) rather than about the required evidence presented.

6919 - Investigating Electronic Business

To successfully achieve this unit, learners need to demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding and application of knowledge across the full range and scope of the unit outcomes, in particular the unit assessment outcomes/criteria, the specific AO's, and the mark band (MB) distributions (Applied Business Awards Specifications Pages 37 and 41). In as much as learners need to show a clear understanding of the subject and the practical application of the unit requirements from a balanced contribution across the four knowledge/applications Strands, the related AO's and marking criteria bands.

Therefore, in relation to the Unit specifications (p35 and 36) learners should:

- Show knowledge and understanding of a range of business situations and web based concepts.
- Be aware of relevant and up-to-date information from a range of sources in relation to an online presence.
- Use adequate techniques and methods on the collection of information, analysis and design of a business web site.
- Be awareness of the issues, problems or opportunities of website/online presence.
- Be able to prioritise evidence and arguments
- Show judgement in the selection and presentation of findings
- Present additional examples and appropriate materials in support of a conclusions
- Demonstrate the application of techniques and methods in the design and building of a website in an appropriate business context.
- Evaluate the business context and is aware of the issues, problems or opportunities poses by a web presence.

In particular, the work sampled indicated appropriate website being identified by learners and in general, an explanation of the features and purpose of the sites, with the analysis of the site's functions in support of the business achieving its objectives as required for Strand (a) AO1/2 much improved. Wider and more specific examples were included to show the linkage between the website and the business objectives. However, the detailed evaluation on how a business can use a web presence to meet its objectives, is still limited for MB3.

To ensure the full development across Strand (a), to MB3, an appropriate selection of businesses and websites should present, if possible contrasting site/businesses should be encouraged to support further evaluation. e.g. B2B, B2C or G2C type sites

A single business needs to be selected to explore its strengths and weaknesses in an internet presence for strand (b). The business of choice is important for the depth of analysis, evaluation and the selection of drawbacks possible in moving from MB1 through to MB3. More examples on the drawbacks to having an internet presence relevant for that business and provide any recommendations for improvements in the website should be included, especially in relation to the stated business aims and objectives.

The depth of analysis into the factors for the business must be considered beyond the generic, including the consideration of legislation, costs and maintenance/training expenses. In addition, a justification and/or consideration of the business opportunities a website could offer should be considered. Overall the candidate must demonstrate an understanding of the needs/factors for a realistic online presence and justify their choice, as required for Strand (c) AO3.

In the sample, candidate's continue to demonstrated a good understand of the design and build processes for a creating a website for AO1 & A02 in criteria Strand (d). In should be noted; the website can be for an existing or planned business, provided it is realistic and offers a full opportunity for learners to fulfil the requirements of strand. The use of initial plans and outlines for a website is well developed however candidates need to include clear evidence e. g. flow diagrams, site layouts, page sketches and links, navigation structures and detailed content relating to the images, clips, page linkage and content outlines linked to the site under development. The appropriateness for the business of the proposed website, e.g. the described target audience, its ease of use, user interface and consideration of how the site will be seen by users and its value to customers is important for gaining MB3,

Authentication

For the web site as described/designed for Strand (d) MB2 & MB3, centres should include evidence to confirm originality of leaner work, especially in relation to the website functionality and appropriateness for the business and user. The use of witness statement, tutor comments, observation checklist and signed screen/output documents should present in the material.

Standardisation

Consistent marking and standardisation within centres was evident however in assessing higher performance, assessors need to consider the depth and scope of material in terms of quality of examples and quality and reasoning of evaluation in the learner's work to award the higher MB3 marks.

Enhancing Assessment

Centre should ensure, especially in relation to the higher mark bands that clear evidence of analysis of how a business can use a web presence to meet its objectives and an evaluation with examples of how these businesses set objectives are met by a web presence is included for MB3 strand (a).

For strand (b and c) detailed analysis and consideration of legislation, on going costs of maintenance, training and updating expenses should be included. Candidates should be encouraged to explore and evaluate the influences, needs and design considerations for using a website to support a business in its achievement of objectives with appropriate examples.

For the design and operation of a website Strand (d), candidates should be encouraged to provide a working example of their designed website to achieve higher marks in MB3. Thus authenticated evidence of navigation, examples of images, clips, page linkage and content outlines to support its construction and functionality should be included by tutors.

6920 - Investigating Customer Service

To successfully achieve this unit, learners need to demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding and application of knowledge across the full range and scope of the unit outcomes. In as much as learners need to show a clear understanding of the subject and the practical application of the unit requirements from a balanced contribution across the four knowledge/applications Strands, the related AO's and marking criteria bands.

Therefore, in relation to the Unit specifications learners should show:

- An understanding and the knowledge covering a range of business customers, service, with some explanation of needs and expectations..
- An ability to select and apply relevant information from a wide range of sources, about specific customer service provided in the business chosen.
- The use of techniques and methods to investigate how a business manages, monitors and improves customer service.
- An ability to describes and explain UK and EU legislation within a chosen business customer service context.

and

- Provide a detailed explanation of a range of business customers and service, with an explanation of the business meets these needs and expectations.
- Apply and review techniques and methods to investigate how a business manages, monitors and improves customer service
- And make appropriately evaluated and justified judgements and recommendations throughout the strands.

In particular, the work sampled indicated an appropriate selection of the two organisations. However, in some cases the identification and explanation of their customer service was imbalanced with internal customers generally receiving lesser considerations. Both sets of customers been to be explored in terms of need and expectations, and imbalance may be adequate for MB1, but not for a higher performance at MB2/3.

In some cases a very generic evaluation of customer service, with no real evidence of experiencing the service, i.e. no explicit in-company/organisation investigation being evident. This could limit the range and scope of examples and subsequent judgements and conclusions presented.

Evidence of independent research into the process of maintaining, monitoring and improving customer service presented. Further consideration of organisational material, documents and methods could be introduced to explain the potential/developmental aspects of quality service enhancement, as require for MB3.

Candidates demonstrated a good understand of UK legislation and working procedures and regulation. Although over historical/descriptive in some aspect the range of evidence presented adequate for MB1 However, EU legislation was generally weak with little explicit reference to the underpinning directives etc. being described, nor was the application of legislation or working processes covered sufficiently to support an MB2/3 overall level of performance.

A presentation is required for this unit and confirmation of the presentation being performed should be evident (in most cases this was apparent).

Standardisation

From the material presented for consideration, internal moderation and standardisation would appear to be being conducted. Assessors need to consider the depth and scope of examples and supportive evaluation/reflective material that should be present in the learner's work to award the higher MB2/3 marks. See assessment comments below.

The sample assignments presented would indicate assessment was consistent within the individual centres.

Authentication

Clear sign-off to confirm of leaner work, its originality and origins were present in the sampled material.
Where presentation form part of the assessment criteria, evidence of performance, using witness statements or observation checklists should be included in the portfolio of work.

Sample and timeline

Material was presented that satisfied the correct sampling frame and time widow.

Enhancing Assessment

For stand (a) Two organisations need to be identified with an explanation of their customer service, it is important that internal customers receive appropriate considerations, in terms of need and expectations, limited internal customers may be adequate for MB1, however, for higher grades sufficient depth and appropriate examples should be included both internal and external, covering needs and expectations.

Strands (b) and (c) require evidence of independent research into and application of the business process of maintaining, monitoring and improving customer service. Further consideration of organisational material, documents and methods could be introduced to explain the potential/developmental aspects of quality service enhancement, as require for MB3. There appears to be a weakness in coverage of the monitoring aspects of customer service procedures/processes and the consideration of improvements for the higher bands,

Within Strand (d) candidates demonstrated a good understand of UK legislation and working procedure regulation. Although in most cases an over historical/descriptive approach, this may be adequate for MB1. However, EU legislation needs to more explicit and cross-reference to business activities and practices. The inclusion of the underpinning EU directives etc. related to the equivalent UK legislation would improve coverage and could be used develop/describe its application in working processes, this is required especially for an MB2/3 overall level of performance.

A presentation is required for this unit and confirmation of the presentation being performed should be evident.

6921 – Investigative Promotion

The feedback given below is based on comments from all examiners involved in marking this unit.

This is the fifth series for the Investigating Promotions paper. The structure of the paper should now be familiar to both centres and students, as should the emphasis on context and application. There are no plans to change the structure of the paper for Summer 2008, nor the very definite reliance on application to real businesses and real business situations. Centres and students are, therefore, strongly advised to make use of past papers, their detailed mark schemes and past reports on these papers. Full details of the approach and standards expected are provided in these introductory notes and through reference to specific questions below.

There were the usual two case studies where details are given about specific businesses. For this paper, these were *Post Office Ltd* and five garages and showrooms owned by Parees Barot. There were also three 10-mark questions based on businesses' promotional campaigns, which students have studied during their course. For this paper, these were
(i) window displays used by high street stores; (ii) informative promotion; (iii) the use of telephone calls for marketing.

Candidates responded well to most of the situations they were presented with and very few questions were not attempted. There is clear evidence that candidates are thinking more carefully about the scenarios and tailoring their answers to them, but frequently not fully enough. This improvement, however, continues to be marred by the four perennial problems that have been referred to in previous reports.

a) Not reading the questions carefully enough.
b) Not following instructions.
c) A lack of basic knowledge of basic facts and terminologies.
d) Not relating the answers to the specific context given.

Specific examples were given in the Summer 2007 report, and examples are shown below in the comments made on the individual questions for this paper.

One continuing problem with the way in which candidates actually write their answers does need to be emphasised separately. There is still very strong evidence that some candidates are restricting their answers to the lines provided and stopping before they have given the full answers of which they are capable. This often happens when weaker candidates start their answers by writing out most of the question, but it is also clearly happening with stronger candidates who could benefit from additional lines.

Candidates should, therefore, take one of the following approaches if they find that the lines do not provide enough space for the answers they want to give:

- Continue writing below the lines if there is a blank space provided.
- Continue writing in another part of the booklet where there is space.
- Continue writing on an additional sheet of examination paper and attach this to the booklet.

Whenever answers are continued outside of the space of the lines provided, the candidate must indicate this fact.

Comments on specific questions

Basic details for the two main scenarios will be given at the start of each set of questions that relate to that scenario, in this case in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The information given about each business may be useful for any of the questions that relate to that scenario, and candidates should be prepared to look back at each figure as they progress through the questions to see if there is any information that would help them to answer the specific question they are on.

Figure 1 – This outlined the element of *Post Office Ltd*'s promotional campaign that the questions were being asked about. All of the details were, therefore, were important and should have been kept in mind for all of the questions about this campaign. One detail that seemed to be fairly quickly forgotten was that this was a magazine that was being offered free to customers.

1(a) – This was generally well-answered and candidates selected appropriate features from the wide range shown in Figure 1. Some explanations as to why this would attract customers were weak and it was not enough simply to say that customers would be interested in the feature without explaining why, in reasonable depth. Some candidates ignored the instruction to explain **one** feature and simply gave a list of features with no explanations, limiting their mark to 1.

2(a) – This was well-answered, with the majority of candidates focusing on convenience and the ease of carrying the magazine around. With a little additional detail, it was easy to score full marks and many candidates did this. Some candidates did get confused with the specific measure of size and assumed that, because it was A5, it would have less content so less reading and, bizarrely, more and larger pictures.

2(b) – Candidates who responded to the words 'decisions' and 'before' had little difficulty in choosing three distinct decisions. Some candidates gave actions, such as 'proof read', rather than decisions. Some candidates gave decisions that were not in sufficient detail to make it clear what they referred to, e.g. they used the single word 'promotion'. Some candidates gave decisions that were not distinct, e.g. 'what it should look like' and 'layout'.

2(c) – The benefits discussed here needed to be ones that related to the business rather than to the customer. Sometimes the benefits to customers were also clear benefits to the business – for example, a wider range of people would be able to access the magazine through the internet. In other cases, as with customers not needing to go to post offices to collect the magazine, there was no definite reason why that would benefit *Post Office Ltd*. An explanation was needed, such as, if it was inconvenient, customers might not bother picking up the magazine, but having access to the internet meant that they did not need to go to the post office so the magazine would still be accessed and the promotional messages seen.

Many candidates only referred to the benefits of being online and did not make clear comparisons with picking up the magazine in the post office. This also tended to mean that only the benefits were explained and there was no discussion of any negative aspects of being online.

There were also some very well-thought-out answers, with good reasoning, discussion and comparison, easily gaining the full 8 marks available.

3(a) – This was not well answered by many candidates mainly because they did not specify exactly what type of promotion was involved. It was, therefore, difficult for them to show why the competitions demonstrated a specific type of promotion. It was also clear that many candidates saw the magazine as a way of selling products, rather than simply making them aware of the products and of the business. The primary aim of publicity was not picked up by most of the candidates.

3(b) – These questions were specifically designed to test application of knowledge and understanding and the selection of the appropriate features of the competitions. They were not general questions about the benefits of a business running a competition, but some candidates interpreted both questions as asking for this.

Both competitions had three unique features that should have formed the basis on which to answer the questions. Many candidates did identify one or more of these and gave well-reasoned answers but, for weaker candidates, it did not seem to matter what the actual competition was. Generally, part (i) had fuller answers than part (ii).

3(c) – This question allowed for two or three approaches and most candidates were able to use these effectively. A minority of candidates took on the legal argument, but then added little to the basic statement that it was a legal requirement. Many confused the specific Acts that relate to unsolicited marketing with the Data Protection Act, explaining that the business was either obliged to keep the data secure or not to sell it on to another business. This ignored the stated situation of the business trying to contact the competition entrants.

Many followed arguments related to customers not wanting to be approached by the business and then often gave fairly well-developed answers. Other candidates gave well-reasoned arguments about what the benefits to the business would have been if only some of the boxes had been ticked and how that would have told the business whether or not customers minded being contacted and which would have been the best method to contact them.

4 – Most candidates could identify limitations but only the better candidates went on to explain why these would make it difficult to measure the effectiveness of the magazine, especially in terms of getting the promotional messages across or generating sales. A very significant number of candidates went on to outline and explain alternative methods of monitoring, which would have been more effective measures of efficiency. Most of these would have been more effective but that was not asked for and so gained no marks. It also meant that valuable time and space were wasted, which could have been used to gain marks by considering other limitations or explaining more fully the ones that had been identified.

5 – Most candidates had some idea of what these very common promotional terms meant and those who were uncertain could generally work out, from the context in which the question was set, what the meanings were. What was disappointing was the number of candidates who missed out one or other of the elements of each part of the question. For example, candidates defined 'off-peak' as being a time when there were low viewer numbers, but did not then give a time or reason, and gave the common example of library music being used in the background to an advertisement but then did not pick up on the 'library'.

6(a) – The majority of candidates could give basic reasons but there was usually limited development to support these. For many candidates, the answers were mainly speculative with some poorly-thought-out assumptions. Typical of the approach was the argument that, because still photographs were being used, it would be impossible to show some parts of the garage or showroom as moving image was not being used. That ignored the fact that moving image is simply a set of still pictures taken in rapid succession. There was also a common assumption that, because it was still photography, the final quality would be poor - again ignoring the very high quality of photography that goes into most glossy magazines.

What was needed, but was rarely present in the answers, was additional thought and application. What the still photographs would not show is movement and that would make it difficult to show active parts of the business, such as a car being slowly lifted up on a ramp. The quality of the photographs might be poor if Parees took the photographs himself because he did not have the skills to create sophisticated artwork.

6(b) – The basic requirement of the Act was given by most candidates, although there were a few who did not attempt this question. Some thought that the Act dictated what must be included in every advertisement; others, who confused this Act with the Data Protection Act, stated that information cannot be given about previous owners, and even about mileage.

Marks were also lost because examples were not taken from the sale of a car or examples referred to the photographs and not the information included with them. Both of these were caused by not reading the question carefully enough.

7 – Any package could have been taken here although the gold package gave more scope for justifications, as did a 20- or 30-second slot. Arguing simply that a package was cheaper was, by itself, not a valid approach because candidates had been told that Parees could afford to buy any of the packages. However, if other valid reasons for saving costs could be given, this was then an acceptable approach - as with increasing expenditure on other promotions, or because the additional expenditure was not worth the limited extra time or facilities.

There were some well-argued answers, with good justifications. The best candidates considered all three parts of the table, the length of the slots in terms of time, the number of peak and off-peak slots and the facilities. They also related these to details about Parees's business, e.g. the number of outlets and the need to promote the garages and showrooms. Candidates doing all of this gained very high marks. However, there was also clear evidence of candidates writing to the line provided and stopping before a full answer had been given.

Questions based on own study of examples during the course

Because each of these questions carries 10 marks, the general points from previous reports are repeated:

(a) These questions can be based on any part of the syllabus so it is vital that, as students study this unit, they are building a very wide range of real promotional campaigns, examples of promotional tools and methods being used and actual applied constraints. Without this wide range of material to use, candidates could find that they are faced with a topic area that they simply cannot provide answers for.

(b) For these questions, it is vital that candidates select a business, product or promotional campaign that will allow them to answer all of the questions. Candidates should, therefore, read all of the questions before choosing the product. There has been evidence of candidates choosing only on the basis of part (a), starting to answer, finding that it was the wrong choice, but still trying to carry on with it.

(c) Generally these questions are written so that it is possible for candidates to get the first part(s) wrong but still gain marks in the later part(s). It is, therefore, important that candidates do attempt all parts of the question, even if they are uncertain about some parts. Examples are given below against the actual questions.

(d) Some candidates give very vague details of what the business, product or campaign is. When this is done, it is sometime impossible for examiners to identify which real promotion is being written about. This can result in candidates scoring no marks for the whole of the question. Candidates must provide sufficient information about the business, product or campaign to ensure that it can be identified as being real. Usually this will be done in part (a) but sometimes candidates may have forgotten specific details. However, the way in which they provide details in (b), (c), etc., will allow the examiners to identify the actual business, product or campaign the candidate is referring to.

8 – The main context of this question was not fully understood by some candidates. Here, a single display was the focus of the question as was emphasised by the words ‘the display’ in part (b) and ‘this window display’ in part (c). The best answers came from candidates who used one specific display for all parts of the question.

Part (a) was straightforward, but the wrong selection of a business did, in some cases, make it difficult to gain marks in (b). It would also have helped candidates to focus more on the nature of the specific window display if they had put down what products were ‘shown in the window display’ as the actual specific products shown, rather than just fairly generic details about cloths or mobile phones.

Part (b) required a clear description of the display itself. A significant number of candidates left it at that and did not explain why it would attract attention or why it would enhance the business’s image. Some candidates wrote about more than one display. Most candidates found it difficult to isolate the features in the display that would enhance image. There were some very well-described and well-argued answers, which gained full marks, but again there was evidence that candidates lost marks by only writing to the lines provided.

In part (c) candidates found little difficulty in giving a basic reason but only the better candidates went on to fully develop their explanations.

9 – This whole question was poorly-answered by most candidates. The main reason for this is that they did not seem to understand the basic distinction between the main purposes of advertising, providing information and persuasion. This was made very clear when candidates gave, as their example, supermarkets ‘informing’ their customers that their prices were lower than all other supermarkets. Most candidates seemed to assume that any piece of information was informative advertising.

For part (a), selecting the right business, product and piece of information was very important. There was a significant minority of candidates who had understood the basic distinction in the types of promotion and chose schools, hospitals, the police and the government for the sources of information. However, some also chose fairly emotive aims for the publicity, such as drink-driving, and that sometimes made it difficult to argue for why it was not persuasive in part (b).

Part (b) needed examples of what the information actually stated, as that was the key as to why it was being provided and why it did not need to be persuasive. The majority of candidates did provide an example but this often turned out to be no more than mere information and no explanation was given as to why it did not need to be persuasive. The candidates using schools, hospitals and clinics found it relatively easy to provide the required explanations.

In part (c) nearly all candidates could provide an appropriate method, but some candidates gave other print media. Some candidates, as with drink-driving campaigns, gave examples of different, and often persuasive, information being used rather than the informative information they had outlined in part (b). Inevitably, some candidates gave more than one method.

10 – This was generally fairly well-answered by most candidates.

In part (b) the main problem was with the second requirement of identifying the time of day when 'most' calls were made. Some answers were unrealistic and either guessed-at or referring to a time when the candidates or a friend or relative had been contacted. Many candidates put down one time of day, e.g. 5.00 p.m. 'Most' calls would not have been made at one specific time.

In part (b) most candidates could give basic reasons but these tended to relate to using the telephone rather than some other method. Only the better candidates related their answers to the specific product or service being promoted. Candidates who did think about the nature of the product or service tended to give well thought-out full answers.

Part (c) caused few problems for most candidates but there were some answers given that needed additional details in order to gain a mark. Cost was give as a constraint, but without details of why this would be a costly method of promotion, e.g. each person would need to be contacted separately, that was not accepted.

Comments for future series

The points listed below include comments made in previous reports and these should be checked for the full details.

1. **The applied approach** – All businesses used in these papers relate to real businesses, either named or with the names changed. Preparation for this paper should, therefore, include as much study of the promotional techniques used by real businesses as possible.

2. **Terminologies** – For many candidates, a huge number of marks are being lost simply because they do not know what basic promotion terminologies mean. Centres need to devise methods of ensuring that basic knowledge is there.

3. **Reading the question/following instructions** – Again, a huge number of marks are being unnecessarily lost, simply because candidates have not read the question carefully enough. The suggestion here is that students should be given examples of past questions and be asked to re-write them to show exactly what each part is asking for. Alternatively, they could be asked to write a mark scheme for the question, and this could then be compared to the actual mark scheme.

6922 - Investigating Enterprise

Administration:

The majority of centres did use the Edexcel front sheets

There was little evidence of standardisation across assessors, however most centres only had one assessor per unit.

The majority of centres submitted portfolios by the deadline, a number sending them early before the start of the Christmas holidays.

Annotation of Portfolio Work

Centres are required to annotate portfolios as given in the Code of Practice, identifying where a candidate's evidence of criteria coverage may be found in the work. Many Centres did this but there were many examples where little or no annotation was evident and moderators had to try to identify where and how marks had been awarded. Other centres annotated by assessment objective, however this does not show how the marks are being allocated to the strands and mark bands.

The recommendation is to annotate by reference to "Mark Band" achieved and "Area" covered e.g. MB1a, MB2b etc. Clear annotation supports the candidates as well as internal standardisation and external moderation processes.

Assessment

Overall the standard of assessment continues to improve. Staff from centres have attended INSET events, have sought advice and had questions sent to Edexcel answered and having entered candidates in previous windows have received external moderator feedback. Centres have also had OSCA feedback.

Performance during this moderation window was better than in previous moderation windows.

A number of centres leniently assessed the unit.

Centres must direct candidates to set up a company. Partnerships are not acceptable. There is clear guidance that a company is required in the unit specifications and assessment evidence.

Centres will find using external agencies such as Young Enterprise and Local Enterprise Agencies (LEAs) helpful. There are also other Enterprise groups/ agencies that can be used. Centres may also consider running a number of enterprises within the class group to generate competition and also to ensure groups are not too big.

Centres are not required to "legally" register the companies, i.e. they can use memorandum and articles of association but not formally register, produce their own share certificates, etc. Young Enterprise and some LEAs will generate these.

Assessment Objectives and Mark Band Evidence

This unit had one of the smallest entries. This is probably due to the need to run an enterprise over time which requires substantial work commitment outside lesson time.

In a number of centres the candidates were directed to use an event that had happened in previous years, that were annual events or were too small. These events were to be the main service of the enterprise. The candidates in these centres experienced difficulty in providing evidence of primary research and evidence for other strands. The product or service, it's manufacturing/ delivery, marketing and sales and any after sales must be substantial enough to enable the generation of sufficient evidence for candidates to achieve all strands.

Where events have been used as the "product/ service", especially where there was no income stream/ pricing, the lack of business motivation and entrepreneurial activity restricted the candidate's ability to achieve. Centres should not run an enterprise to organise a parents' evening, a publicity event, etc. School discos should also be avoided.

Centres must also ensure that the group size is not too small or, more importantly, too large. Large groups result in a number of candidates not having a sufficiently important individual input to enable them to achieve on strands A & C.

Photographic evidence was included in a small number of entries. This proved useful and supported the group presentation, however, the use of photographs must be in line with the centre's policy on photographs and parental consent.

The centre has to ensure that the product/ service of the company involves sufficient activity to enable all candidates to have an active input to enable them to move out of mark band 1. A number of centres used events that had happened in previous years, that were annual events or were too small. The candidates in these centres experienced difficulty in providing evidence of primary research and evidence for other strands. A substantive activity is required. Centres must also ensure that the group size is appropriate.

Strand A: The majority of the centres used Young Enterprise as a vehicle for this unit. Some kept detailed records in diaries/ journals and these were the centres that did best on this unit. Some centres failed to enter diaries as part of the evidence. Much of the evidence for candidate involvement comes from the diaries. Diaries also show timelines and made activities clear. They supported the other three strands. Some candidates found it difficult to discuss what they did and tended to use "we". Candidates must make clear their individual input. Evidence needed witness statements to support diaries/ commentaries, these were not always present.

Photographic evidence was included in a small number of entries. This proved useful and supported the group presentation.

Personal evaluations were often weak, one sided and lacked examples.

The centre has to ensure that the product/ service of the company involves sufficient activity and that the group size is small enough to enable all candidates to have an active input to enable them to move out of mark band 1.

Strand B: Some centres produced excellent work for this strand with clear descriptions of roles and responsibilities as well as supported evaluations of team members in these roles. Other centres failed to produce either the descriptions or the evaluations.

There was little detail or underlying theory presented in the work from a number of centres making it difficult to move out of mark band 1.

Personal evaluations were often weak, one sided and lacked examples. There were few fully supported evaluations seen.

Strand C: The witness statements for the presentation were often brief and needed much greater detail. Candidates also should include their own PowerPoint printouts, cue cards, etc. The centre must also ensure that a full copy of the group presentation is sent for moderation to enable individual input to be gauged. The centres should not restrict themselves to the one side of the exemplar witness statement proforma found in the qualification guidance and on the Edexcel website. This is only a guide and centres must ensure that they make full and clear statements about candidate input into the company and the presentation.

Where the activity/ event was too small candidates could not generate sufficient evidence.

Where clear and detailed witness statements showing substantive contribution were present, centres could move candidates into mark band 3. This did need supporting evidence form candidates showing originality of thought and outstanding contribution to the group report and presentation.

Where roles or contribution was minor it was extremely difficult for candidates to move outside mark band 1.

Strand D: This strand needs the financial outcomes of the company to be used to enable effective evaluations. This did not always happen. Some centres did not direct candidates to cover this strand as a separate task and relied upon descriptions of activities and the personal evaluations and the evaluations of the other team members to be the evaluation of the company. Evaluation was often limited to making a profit.

6924 - Managing and Developing People

Administration

Overall, Centres forwarded samples on time and an accurate number of sample portfolios were provided; in most cases, ten portfolios with the highest and lowest mark included.

Statements of authentication were present in the samples moderated for this series. However, these were often not signed by both the candidate and the assessor. Centres should ensure authentication statements are fully completed when submitting evidence for external moderation.

The work submitted again demonstrated similar approaches in content and style from earlier series. Assessment seen was generally consistent with some evidence of leniency and assessment of much of the work around or just outside the limits of tolerance. There were a few instances where assessment was found to be harsh.

Some of the work seen appeared to be re-submitted from June 2007. Where this was the case it was usually difficult to know what changes had been made and Centres are advised to indicate what improvements have been made to work that is re-submitted.

Annotation of Portfolio Work

The minimum requirement for annotation of portfolios is laid down in the Code of Practice to be identification of where a candidate's evidence of criteria coverage may be found in the work. Many Centres provided this but there were still too many examples where little or no annotation was evident and moderators were left trying to identify where and how marks had been awarded. The recommendation to annotate by reference to "Mark Band" achieved and "Area" covered eg MB1a, MB2b etc is currently still not being followed by some Centres but, however this is done, it is worth emphasising again the importance of clear annotation and internal standardisation for the benefit of candidates as well as for external moderation purposes.

Presentation of Portfolio Work

One major concern still remains the inaccessibility and unsuitable presentation of many of the portfolios with work either tightly packed into plastic wallets (that split on opening), left in ring binders or clipped into plastic folders (this simply makes the process of extracting the work more laborious than should be the case). The preferred format is loose-leaf or treasury-tagged sheets that can be easily opened and read.

General Issues

Where Centres had followed advice given in the Chief Examiner's report the approach was found to be suitable with candidates directed to investigate appropriate businesses' practice. In general, it was still felt that the lack of research for this Unit and the poor choice of organisation (and consequent lack of detail) often limited candidates in accessing the higher mark bands.

Areas of the Specification:

(a) Most candidates were able to at least identify and describe the approach of an appropriate motivational strategist with better candidates able to apply theory to working practices and reach conclusions. The key here is a suitable choice of organisation where the candidate has been able to gain good knowledge of the techniques used to motivate employees. Clear guidance towards this is necessary to avoid candidates making unsuitable choices.

(b) Where a suitable project or event had been addressed the evidence of the issues around team working and leadership were more likely to arise. Evidence of meetings was sometimes unclear. The choice of activity often limited candidates in fully developing evidence requirements for higher mark bands. The assessment evidence requirements for this strand consist of an evaluation of a group activity, focused on planning an event or developing and implementing a new system or procedure. In some cases, candidates were able to use evidence from other Units of the specification; notably from Units 7 and 13. The choice of activity often limited candidates in fully developing evidence requirements for higher mark bands. The reasons for holding the meeting and advantages and disadvantages were often generic and not always applied to the team activity. Evidence for Mark Band 3 requires the learner to suggest alternative methods of the planned outcome and this was often limited.

The team-working element of this strand was usually well referenced to a team or motivational theorist. However there was limited application of benefits and drawbacks of team working. There was limited evidence of how an individual's objectives and needs may be different from those of a team.

The second element of this strand focuses on leadership styles and although there was detailed theory included in most portfolios, there was often insufficient application and evaluation of this in relation to the team activity. Alternative leadership styles were addressed but the evidence tended to be fragmented as three or four alternative leadership styles were suggested.

(c) Again, where candidates had been able to review a particular form of training programme or had been a part of one, the evidence was likely to be more relevant than where a more "academic" coverage was found. Taking evidence from eg an interview with an employee who had recently undergone a training programme was found to be a useful approach if the candidate had not experienced this directly.

(d) For this strand, candidates are required to produce a personal development plan and consider formats for skills audits. One of the key weaknesses of the personal development plan was lack of relevant recent research for higher and further education routes and career routes. Evidence of common formats for skills audit was often limited; candidates included study skills audits and should be encouraged to include a work related skills audit instead. Stronger performance was found here where candidates had been clearly guided regarding suitable formats for skills audits and personal development plans with better candidates able to use these well. Data referred to needs to be as current as possible.

6925 – Marketing Decisions

Comments

This is the third series for the Marketing Decisions paper. Full details of the approach and standards expected are provided in these introductory notes and through reference to specific questions below. The feedback is based on comments from all examiners involved in marking this unit.

The structure of the paper should now be familiar to both centres and students, as should the emphasis on context, application and decision making. There will be no changes to the structure of the paper, nor the very definite reliance on application to real businesses and real business situations, in the paper for the Summer 2008 series. Centres and students are, therefore, strongly advised to make use of past papers, their detailed mark schemes and past reports on these papers.

There will also be no change in the format of the paper and answer booklet, so the lines for answering questions are given directly below the individual questions themselves. There is still very strong evidence that some candidates are restricting their answers to the lines provided and stopping before they have provided the full answers they are capable of. This often happens when weaker candidates start their answers by writing out most of the question, but it is also clearly happening with stronger candidates who could benefit from additional lines.

Candidates should, therefore, take one of the following approaches if they find that the lines do not provide enough space for the answer they want to give:

- Continue writing below the lines if there is a blank space provided.
- Continue writing in another part of the booklet where there is space.
- Continue writing on an additional sheet of examination paper and attach this to the booklet.

Whenever answers are continued outside of the space of the lines provided, the candidate must indicate this fact.

The first 70 marks on the paper relate to a single scenario, in this case *Dryden Park*. The questions are preceded by a fairly lengthy outline of the business. The information given there may be useful for any of the questions related to that scenario, and candidates should be prepared to look back at these details as they progress through the questions to see if there are any points that would help them to answer the specific question they are on. The *Dryden Park* scenario caused no problems for candidates although some individual questions did show that candidates have a poor understanding of some specific topics covered in the syllabus.

There will also be two 10 mark questions based on business's marketing campaigns which students have studied during their course. For this paper these were about (i) changes of distribution, and (ii) local and national marketing. Further details on how to study for and choose suitable marketing campaigns for these final questions are given later on.

Candidates are generally thinking more carefully about what the questions are asking them and the context in which the questions have been placed, but frequently marks are lost because one, or both, of these requirements are not met. The perennial problems with candidates approaches to the paper continue and it is worth listing them again.

e) Not reading the questions carefully enough.
f) Not following instructions.
g) A lack of basic knowledge of basic facts and terminologies.
h) Not relating the answers to the specific context given.
i) Not analysing data carefully enough.

Specific examples were given in the Summer 2007 report, and examples are shown below in the comments made on the individual questions for this paper.

Comments on specific questions

1(a) – Most candidates scored well on this question and particularly on the strengths. Where candidates failed to score marks this was mainly because:

- There was insufficient detail about the feature selected from Figure 1 to make it clear why it would be a strength or a weakness and that usually occurred because no explanation was provided. Without an explanation the feature was sometimes not an obvious strength or weakness. This was very clearly shown when candidates simply put down '22 miles from the motorway', which could have been a strength or a weakness. With the explanation, the fact that it was one or the other became clear. Candidates could have made the basic feature clear by simply adding as a strength, 'only', and as a weakness, 'another'.
- Making assumptions about the location that were not clearly referred to in Figure 1, for example that the minor roads would be used as a shortcut to the motorway.
- Not writing about the 'location' but about other features of the business such as the facilities available, for example, the number of rooms available.

1(b) – This was generally well answered when candidates used the additional information given in Figure 1. However, some candidates still confuse opportunities and strengths and then wrote about the facilities *Dryden Park* has, rather than how the very large potential market could provide an opportunity for expansion.

Most candidates who recognised the competitive market gave good answers for that approach when explaining the threats.

1(c) - Most candidates did frame their answers in the context of businesses being the main target market, but a significant minority of candidates did not know what happens in a downturn of the economy. The economy and how it affects marketing decisions is a very important element, not just of PEST but, essentially, of all marketing decisions. This is an area that remains poorly understood.

The mean mark for this question was just over 2 marks and this reflected a general lack of development in the answers to show both why the business customers would be affected by the downturn and why *Dryden Park* would be specifically affected.

2(a) – This question was only well answered by candidates who thought carefully about what they had been asked. Far too many candidates wrote an answer to the question 'Explain how penetration pricing works', with limited application to *Dryden Park* and no application to 'when it opened'.

Many candidates also ignored the instruction to 'Assess how important…' which required some evaluation of the appropriateness of the pricing policy for *Dryden Park* when it opened and a consideration of why it might not have been appropriate, or why alternative pricing policies might have been more appropriate.

2(b) – Few candidates found any difficulty in selecting an appropriate tactical marketing decision, although some gave decisions that would lead to a generally cutting of prices and that broke the basic condition given in the question. Only the better candidates went on to fully justify why their chosen tactical decision would prevent the loss of customers. Some candidates gave more than one tactical marketing decision, despite the clear instruction in the question. Marks were therefore lost because only one of the decisions could be marked and time was wasted on a second decision that could have been spent on providing a fully answer to the first.

3(a) - The wording in this question did cause problems for some candidates and that was taken into account at awarding. However, read with the stem, and read carefully, the meaning should have been clear for the better candidates, at whom this question was aimed.

There were some well argued approaches which included how the business customers might react if they were not offered the same special offers that were being made to other businesses simply because they booked early. There were also good answers that related to how to use the spare capacity at *Dryden Park* once the managers knew when it had firm bookings.

For weak candidates this was a hard question, mainly because they completely ignored the booking of dates convenient to the business customers and simply wrote about what special offers are.

3(b) – Most candidates scored 2 to 3 marks for explaining the problem of businesses and staff being at work during day-time television and so probably not seeing the advertisement. A relatively few candidates picked out the fact that this was national television and then went on to explain why the impact would be limited, e.g. because the businesses were too far away for travelling to *Dryden Park* to be cost effective for them.

4(a) - It remains very disappointing that so many candidates still cannot correctly label a product life cycle and that even more cannot apply their basic knowledge and understanding of what a product life cycle is to the information they are being given about a specific product or service.

- Some candidates provided no labelling at all.
- Many candidates labelled the portions of the cycle itself, often incorrectly, but did not label the axes.
- Some candidates ignored the information completely and tried to use textbook labelling insisting on including a decline stage. This was either labelled on the portion of the line that was still rising, or added as an extrapolation. Nowhere in the information was there any indication that this business was actually going to decline.
- There is still considerable confusion between the terms launch and introduction.
- Candidate often did not put down the dates they had been given, or put them down in the wrong places.

4(b) – Many candidates did not identify what the horizontal line indicated, especially candidates who did not bother to label the vertical axis. Those who did recognise that there were no sales or revenue usually identified the reason for this from 1999 to 2001.

4(c) - In part (i) the majority of candidates did identify the correct segment of the matrix. All of the other segments were identified by a few candidates, as they either did not know what the matrix was for and so guessed, or they did not asks themselves, 'Is this the same product?', 'Is this the same market?'

Part (ii) was well answered, with an appropriate pricing strategy chosen and a basic reason being provided. Better candidates developed their explanations for the full 3 marks. A few candidates suggested changes that were not pricing strategies, such as offering a wider, or different, range of facilities.

5(a) - This was very poorly answered considering how basic the term primary research is. Most candidates clearly had some idea of what the term was about but their descriptions were very badly expressed and what they had actually written was incorrect. The major misconception seems to be that data is primary simply because it is collected by the business that is going to use it. That does not make it primary as is clearly demonstrated by a business which accesses Yellow Pages on the internet to find out where its competitors are located. This is collected by the business but the data has already been collected and published by someone else.

Candidates who gave the correct meaning of this being original or new data usually, but not always, then correctly applied it to what *Dryden Park* had done.

5(b) - This was generally a good discriminator, with nearly all candidates scoring some marks and some candidates giving very full and well reasoned answers. Most candidates used some of the figures given in the table to support the basic reasons for selecting column C, but only the best candidates gave good justification in terms of the specific benefits to *Dryden Park*.

Some candidates took 'targeting' as referring to the ways in which customers had heard about *Dryden Park* and wrote about brochures and telephoning.

5(c) - Most candidates had little difficulty in identifying differences in the ways the business had heard about *Dryden Park* but the reasons for the differences went from basic guesswork and lack of thought to some very sophisticated explanations. This was a question where well reasoned speculation, in context, was rewarded and most candidates tried to provide some valid explanation.

6(a) - Sampling remains the most poorly understood section of the syllabus, despite the fact that the main sampling methods and techniques are specifically named. Very, very few candidates knew what stratified sampling meant, nor how it worked, and, therefore, scored no marks for this question. All four sections of the syllabus attract the same percentage of marks, 25%, and it is vital that candidates are as comfortable with 'Research to inform marketing decision' as there are with the rest of the syllabus. 22 or 23 marks will relate directly to this section.

6(b) - A wide range of acceptable methods were given, from the expected telephone, email and postal surveys to face-to-face approaches and suitable ways of sampling that would not conflict with the stratified sampling contained in the questionnaire itself, such as cluster sampling. Candidates could usually give one step with a basic reason but many had no second step.

A few candidates, who did not read the question carefully enough, gave steps involved in the creation of the questionnaire itself when the stem had stated that the questionnaire had already been constructed and was ready for use.

Questions based on examples from candidates' own study during the course

Because each of these questions carry 10 marks it is worth repeating the main points made in previous reports:

(a) These questions can be on any part of the syllabus so it is vital that as students study this unit they are building up knowledge and understanding of a very wide range of real marketing campaigns that demonstrate specific marketing decisions. Without this wide range of material to use candidates could find that they are faced with a topic area that they simply cannot provide answers for.

(b) For these questions it is vital that candidates select a business, product or marketing campaign that will allow them to answer all of the questions. Candidates should, therefore, read all of the questions before choosing the product or situation.

(c) Often these questions are written so that it is possible for candidates to get the first part(s) wrong, but still gain marks in the later part(s). It is, therefore, important that candidates do attempt all parts of the question, even if they are uncertain about some parts.

(d) Some candidates give very vague details of what the business, product or campaign is. When this is done it is sometimes impossible for examiners to identify which real campaign is being written about. This can result in candidates scoring no marks for the whole of the question. Candidates must provide sufficient information about the business, product or campaign to ensure that it can be identified as being real. Usually this will be done in part (a) but sometimes candidates may have forgotten specific details but the way in which they provide details in (b), (c), etc., will allow the examiners to identify the actual business, product or campaign the candidate is referring to.

7 – This question provided a very stark illustration of the problems created when candidates do not have a good understanding of a specific element or terminology specified in the syllabus. Many candidates confused 'channels of distribution' with 'physical distribution' and even with methods of advertising.

A typical misconception that candidates had was that a retailer, such as a supermarket, would use any other channel than retailer to consumer. There are other channels, as with the use of RDCs, or when the supermarket is also the producer, but generally selling through its outlet or through, for example, the internet, simply involves a different form of physical distribute of the product.

Selection of the right business was very important here. Businesses with clearly different channels of distribution usually have very different target markets and different reasons why they would be effective. Taking a producer or manufacturer which used different channels was the safest. Heinz selling baked beans via supermarkets to consumers, with or without a wholesaler, allows consumers to have individual cans which can be bought with the rest of the family shopping. Selling direct to catering establishments allows them to buy in bulk with discounted prices.

For part (b) the nature of the different target markets needed to be identified and where this was done candidates could usually give an explanation of why the channel was beneficial. This was valid even if the candidate had given basically the same channel in part (a), for example a supermarket selling to customers in store and via the internet at home was still retailer to consumer but this provided a very different benefit for the family on its weekly shop and for the disabled customer unable to visit the store.

8 – Nearly all candidates understood the distinction between local and national although a few candidates took national to mean international and wrote about marketing products in other countries.

8(a) - Generally caused few problems. Any aspect of local and national marketing was acceptable but it did need to be appropriate for the named business and product.

8(b) Again this caused few problems for most candidates in terms of identifying a basic difference, although some candidates did not give examples of promotion, even though the word had been emboldened. Only the best candidates gave well developed explanations of why the promotions would be different.

8(c) - This was not well answered. A significant number of candidates gave constraints that would apply to all markets, such as that the business needed to obey current legislation. To gain marks here candidates either had to identify constraints that occurred because the business was operating in more than one type of market or a constraint that applied to being in a national market, as with the cost of nation television advertising, or to being in a local market, as with understanding what might appeal to local markets in terms of the way the product was promoted.

Comment for future series

1. **The applied approach** – All businesses used in these papers relate to real businesses, either named or with the names changed. Preparation for this paper should therefore include as much study of marketing decisions being made by real businesses as possible.

2. **Terminologies** – For many candidates a huge number of marks are being lost simply because they do not know what the basic marketing terminologies mean. Centres need to devise methods of ensuring that basic knowledge and understanding is there.

3. **Reading the question/following instructions** – Again, a huge number of marks are being unnecessarily lost, simply because candidates have not read the question carefully enough. The suggestion here is that students should be give examples of past question and be asked to re-write them to show exactly what each part is asking for. Alternatively, they could be asked to write a mark scheme for the question, and this could then be compared to the actual mark scheme.

4. **Writing full answers** – Where candidates need additional space to write their answers they should use blank spaces in the booklet provided, or use additional sheets. Whilst writing out part of the question may help some candidates focus on what the question is about, the space lost when this is done must be compensated for by continuing the answers beyond the space provided by the answer lines provided.

6926 - Impact of Finance on Business Decisions

Administration

Most centres submitted portfolios on time. Administration was generally good. Statements of authentication were present in most of the samples moderated for this series. However, these were not always signed by both the candidate and the assessor. Centres should ensure authentication statements are fully completed when submitting evidence for external moderation.

The work submitted again demonstrated similar approaches in content and style from earlier series. Assessment seen was generally consistent with some evidence of leniency and assessment of much of the work around or just outside the limits of tolerance.

Annotation of Portfolio Work

Annotation of the work, though clear and appropriate in many cases, still varied from indicating fully where criteria had been met, to being very limited with little more than the final mark given. Annotation is best indicated via the Mark Band achieved and the area of the spec met so, e.g. MB1a indicates area (a) has met Mark Band 1, rather than trying to annotate via the Assessment Objectives (AO's) as these are spread throughout the Unit's strands or themes. In general, marks on the work conformed to those on the OPTEMS.

There was some evidence of standardisation where more than one assessor was involved in judging candidates' work.

General Comments

From the work seen it would appear that this Unit either tends to be well understood and clearly addressed or the candidates hardly grasp the issues of business financing at all. In the latter case, moderation was more problematic and it was sometimes difficult to understand the assessment decisions made. On the whole, as indicated above, assessment tended to be on the lenient side.

Areas of the Specification

As with all other Units, where the assessment criteria have been understood and addressed efficiently the approach is more likely to be successful. This Unit allows for the inclusion of simulated material and where this has been well devised candidates find it easier to access the higher Mark Bands. Clear tutor guidance again appears to be a key factor with respect to some of the (relatively) complex aspects of this Unit.

(a) Most candidates again selected the published accounts of plc's – although not all used the available financial information – and others selected business where financial information was not so readily available. The items moderated suggested that candidates who used actual financial information produced better quality of work, especially where differences and trends with these figures were explored over time. Classification into internal and external sources and long-term vs short-term is a suitable basis for analysis but was not always used. Better candidates' work addressed issues of risk and return.

(b) Candidates' work was generally better than in (a) - more focused and financial information was more readily available. It helped if, at the outset, candidates were able to clearly demonstrate an understanding of "working capital" and then applied this in context. Where a clear understanding of working capital and financial ratios was demonstrated and candidates were able to apply this in context then the relevance of the nature of the business chosen became more apparent.

(c) Better candidates demonstrated awareness of different appraisal techniques and were able to reach reasoned conclusions. At the lower end, some candidates struggled to show much understanding of these techniques at all and thus had great difficulties in making use of them.

There is still evidence that a number of centres extracted and used the Teacher's Guide illustrative material for this theme. Although there is no penalty for this approach, other than the penalty of using some information that is out-of-date, it should not continue to be used in future years. Reasons for this include: the Teacher's Guide is in the public domain (on the Edexcel website) and contains analytical and other comments that are readily available to students, thus potentially negating the work as their own the quality of a simulated or fictionalised company that is used determines candidates' ability to access marks in the MB3 range, and the simulations used are not as fully developed as they could be, and contain dated information (eg, the interest rates). Accepting the comment made in the guidance to the unit that strand (d) can be assessed through the use of fictionalised or simulated material (which certainly applies to strand (c), it may be more appropriate for candidates to apply their knowledge to real financial information from a real company. Centres are therefore requested to create (for (c)), their own simulation, which could of course use the Teachers' Guide as a foundation. If a simulation must be used for (d), it should be based on real company financial and other (eg market) information that has been fictionalised.

Centres that used their own simulation for theme (c) usually wrote an appropriate scenario that gave candidates the opportunity to use the three main methods of investment appraisal. Sensitive analysis is a suitable area for consideration but was not always present, and evidence of conflicts and problems was limited. Stronger pieces of work calculated and analysed IRR as well as DCF/NPV.

(d) This is still a difficult strand with some candidates showing an understanding of debt/equity issues and fewer this time looking at it from a personal investment standpoint. It can be approached from the point of view of either a private individual investor, or a corporate investor but should consider business investment rather than savings schemes as was sometimes the case. The stronger coursework tended to group and consider ratios under appropriate headings (profitability, liquidity, efficiency and investment), which appeared to aid candidates in analysing and drawing conclusions.

6927- International Dimemsions Of Business

To successfully achieve this unit, learners need to demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding and application of knowledge across the full range and scope of the unit outcomes, in particular the unit assessment outcomes/criteria, the specific AO's, and the mark band (MB) distributions (Applied Business Awards Specifications Pages 109 to 114). In as much as learners need to show a clear understanding of the subject and the practical application of the unit requirements from a balanced contribution across the four knowledge/applications Strands, the related AO's and marking criteria bands.

Therefore, in relation to the Unit specifications (p109 and 110) learners should:

- Explain the impact and opportunities created for businesses in international context.
- Present relevant and up-to-date information, from a range of sources, on the factors influencing the establishment of an international presence.
- Perform an investigation into the chosen (international) businesses.
- Identify the advantages and disadvantages in the growth potential for a business supported by international organisations (WTO etc).

- Prioritise evidence and show judgement in the selection and presentation of findings
- Present exemplar material appropriate to support their conclusions
- Explain the strengths and weaknesses in all aspects of creating/developing a presence as offered to a business within an international context.
- Examine the opportunities and challenged offered by global business
- Explore and present conclusions and outcomes, reflecting the positive and negative aspects for Host countries, international organisations and businesses operating in an international environment.

In particular, two businesses identified for strand (a), The businesses should be contrasting nature and spread of international/global coverage (EU and Global is suggested in the unit specification) this should provide adequate variety for comparison/variations in the way they address there business objectives for an international presences. Two organisations in the same sector offer a good opportunity to contrast on their international scale/spread. It should be noted, that the appropriateness of the business selected is significant for the potential achievement of the higher band.

The depth of research material on the factors that influence a business in creating an international presented is critical in terms of the volume, quality, appropriateness and examples for MB2/3 performance. It would be of value to encourage candidates to select the chosen business for strand (b) from those used in strand (a), this would provide a base for material research, and be supplemental to that collected for stand (a). Evidence of independent research into the influencing factors were present, however, the depth of research is critical in terms of the volume, quality and appropriateness of material evidence and examples gathered and used to support their arguements

The key impact factors that an International Organisation (IO) can have on a business were covered, although IOs were covered generically using a limited range and in some cases not fully related to the business of choice, this may be appropriate for MB1/2 (c), however for MB3 candidates need to show clearly the link between the host nation IOs and the business used as an example. It should be noted that for this strand the IO is an external organisation set up to support/promote trade, not the organisation in question itself.

Candidates demonstrated a general understand of the issues relating to the growth in Global/Multi National Corporations(MNC), in terms of GDP and consumer impact, further consideration of the wider socio-economic and environmental aspects on the Host country could have been included, to underpin a critical appraisal and potential justification for MNC activity as require for MB3.

Authentication

Centres should include evidence to confirm originality of leaner work, the counter signature of the Assessment Marking Forms by tutors is critical in this process. Where appropriate witness statement, tutor comments, observation checklist could be used to support the authenticity of presented material.

Standardisation

Consistent marking and standardisation within centres was evident however in assessing higher performance, assessors need to consider the depth and scope of material in terms of quality of examples and quality and reasoning of evaluation in the learner’s work to award the higher MB3 marks.

Enhancing Assessment

It would be of value to encourage candidates to select the chosen business for strand (b) from those used in strand (a), this would provide a base for material research, and be supplemental to that collected for stand (a).
Centres should ensure, when assessing especially in relation to the higher mark bands across all stands that clear evidence of explanation, critique and analysis of how/why the two businesses would consider and/or have a global activity, with good examples to support the MB2/MB3 marks.

For Strand (c) more detailed analysis and consideration of a wider range of influences, from a business perspective, under the influences offered by the International Organisations. The awarding of the MB3 marks is critically linked to candidate articulation of the selection, evaluation and the relevance of the selected exemplars.

Strand (d), candidates should consider looking beyond the financial and consumer/customer impact, to the wider socio-economic, suppliers, distribution and environmental aspects on the Host country.

6928 - Organising an Event

Administration:

The majority of centres did use the Edexcel front sheets.

There was little evidence of standardisation, however most centres only had one assessor per unit.

Many of the submissions were "re-submissions" of work presented in June with additional work from the candidates added.

Annotation of Portfolio Work

Centres are required to annotate portfolios as given in the Code of Practice, identifying where a candidate's evidence of criteria coverage may be found in the work. Many Centres did this but there were many examples where little or no annotation was evident and moderators had to try to identify where and how marks had been awarded. Other centres annotated by assessment objective, however this does not show how the marks are being allocated to the strands and mark bands.

The recommendation is to annotate by reference to "Mark Band" achieved and "Area" covered e.g. MB1a, MB2b etc. Clear annotation supports the candidates as well as internal standardisation and external moderation processes.

Assessment

Overall the standard of assessment continues to improve. Staff from centres have attended INSET events, have sought advice and had questions sent to Edexcel answered and having entered candidates in previous windows have received external moderator feedback.

A number of centres leniently assessed the unit.

Many centres did not set/ organise suitable events. A number were too small, had too many pre-arranged or school arranged activities and did not leave sufficient work for the candidates to plan and deliver the event.

Where suitable size events happened then the approach was generally good although some candidates failed to actually describe their role in the event or the event itself.

In some centres the planned events did not happen. This caused problems as candidates could not access marks in mark band c and many of the marks in mark band d.

Witness statements &/or photographs to confirm that the event was held and the participation of the candidates are vital to this unit and these were often missing.

Most centres adopted a group work approach to the planning and delivery. A very small number only submitted group reports and these were not acceptable as each candidate must individually address the assessment criteria.

Assessment Objectives and Mark Band Evidence

Strand A: Feasibility research was often limited, especially where the event was an annual one or where the event was not the required “substantial event”. Primary research was usually questionnaires about choices of event or interviews with staff who had run the event in the previous year(s). Results were not usually analysed. Secondary research was usually research into travel costs or costs of physical resources. There was little prioritisation or reasoned conclusions.

Where centres divided groups up into smaller groups working on research and feasibility on various events but then did “other” events, problems were caused as candidates had not covered feasibility for the chosen event.

Strand B: Constraints were usually present however risk assessment was often poor. Many candidates simply referred to the completion of their centre’s risk assessment documentation by staff. These did not demonstrate knowledge or understanding of risk assessment. There was no prioritisation, ranking or rating of risks to probability of happening and severity of outcome.
Many candidates could not produce contingency plans. Evidence presented for this was often a list of potential problems with some comments on what to do if this happened. This is not a contingency plan.

Insurance needs tended to be covered under the statement that the centre’s insurance covered all risks. Some candidates did explain different types of insurance and apply them to the event. A small number of candidates simply listed every conceivable form of insurance.

Strand C: As stated above: Witness statements &/or photographs to confirm that the event was held and the participation of the candidates are vital to this unit and these were often missing. Candidates often failed to fully explain their input or simply referred to “we”. The better answers gave detailed accounts of the candidate’s contribution through all stages of planning and holding the event.

Where clear and detailed witness statements showing significant sustained participation were present, centres could move candidates into mark band 3.

Strand D: Evaluation was often poor. Few candidates referred back to original aims and objectives. A small number of centres collected feedback questionnaires from participants and used these effectively.

6929- External Influences on Business

To successfully achieve this unit, learners need to demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding and application of knowledge across the full range and scope of the unit outcomes, in particular the unit assessment outcomes/criteria, the specific AOs, and the mark band (MB) distributions (Applied Business Awards Specifications Pages 131 to 134). In as much as learners need to show a clear understanding of the subject and the practical application of the unit requirements from a balanced contribution across the four knowledge/applications Strands, the related AOs and marking criteria bands.

Therefore, in relation to the Unit specifications (p131 and 132) learners should:

- Provide clear coverage of the four issues influences on a business, with suitable exemplar material to support the discussion.
- Include relevant and up-to-date information, from a suitable range of sources and examples with appropriate materials presented in support of the final issue conclusions
- Use appropriate techniques and methods on the collection of information and analysis, showing awareness of the selection and relevance of information, issues, problems or opportunities.
- Explain the positive and negative aspects of the key issues on a business.
- Show judgement in the selection and appropriate presentation of the findings in a suitable format.
- Evaluate the business external issues, the business influences and the wider organisational context, thus beings aware of the issues, problems and/or opportunities

In particular, the work sampled indicated step towards adoption of the two suggested formats from previous reports Namely, a statement, similar that which a company chair would present in the annual published accounts, or a scripted presentation of the full issues etc, as would be presented at an Annual General Meeting, including the supportive supplementary documentation that explains and highlighting the external issue (including evidence of research) that the company may/is facing over the next years.

It should be noted that the unit has four prescribes issues to address and each strands focuses specifically on an individual AOs and performance descriptors, therefore each strand is repeatedly addressed for each individual influence (four) against each AO.

The business selected is important for the candidates to research and explore the external impacts associated with that business, coupled with need for depth of researched material across all four influence areas, are critical for strand (D).

Candidates demonstrated a generally good understand of the overall external factors (stand a)), with substantial amount of research data generated in some cases, however, this material needs to be filtered, evaluated and used as appropriate to the business and influence under discussion, thus enhancing the overall quality of the report as required for MB2/3 in strands (b), (C) and (d).

Authentication

Centres should include evidence to confirm originality of learner work, the counter signature of the Assessment Marking Forms by tutors is critical in this process.

Standardisation

Consistent marking and standardisation within centres was evident however in assessing higher performance, assessors need to consider the depth and scope of material in terms of quality of examples and quality and reasoning of evaluation in the learner's work to award the higher MB3 marks.

Enhancing Assessment

An appropriate Chair's report must be produced, although no specific structure is suggested, it would be advisable for candidates to present their findings in a form, similar that which are outlined above. In addition candidates should be encouraged to select a business which is of sufficient size, structure and product and/or service range to allow all four influences to be examined to an appropriate depth.

Centres should encourage fuller/wider consideration of the range, value, up to date and appropriateness of the information being used and being applied across each of the influence, to ensure equality of treatment as to the depth of knowledge, research and evaluation. It was evident from the sample, technological and to some extent the environment influences were covered to a lesser extent or explored from a theoretical/generic perspective within strand (a) and thus not fully relevant and/or applied in strand (b).

The business selected is important for the candidates to research and explore the external impacts associated with and relevant to that business, beyond the theoretical and business generic. This depth of researched material across all four influence areas is critical for strand (D). Candidates should avoid providing historical descriptions of the company of choice unless it is relevant to the influence being discussed.

Substantial amount of research data is being generated, this material needs to be filtered and evaluated for appropriateness (covering AO2 and AO3) to the business of choice and the influence under discussion, this will enhance the quality of the documentation and ensure fuller consideration of the range, value, up to date and appropriateness of the information presented for each influence, especially for MB3.

For stand (d) clear justifications for the judgements made about the impacts of each of the four influences is required, considering the wider business context, beyond descriptive/generic statements about the four influences, to include a more explanatory and evaluatory narrative.

Applied GCE Business – Grade Boundaries

6916	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw	90	58	51	44	38	32
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6917	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	49	43	37	31	25
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6918	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	25
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6919	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	49	43	38	**33**	28
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6920	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6921	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	90	58	52	46	40	35
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6922	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	49	43	37	31	25
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6924	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6925	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	90	55	49	43	38	33
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6926	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6927	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	48	42	36	30	24
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6928	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	50	44	38	32	27
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40
6929	**Max Mark**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
Raw	60	49	43	37	31	26
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40

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