

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2010

GCE

GCE Applied Business (6917) Paper 01

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PM Report on coursework paper 6917/01 - Investigating Business - January 2010

General Comments

Overall, the standard of assessment was better than in previous windows. There were less centres out of tolerance.

Candidates tend to be scoring higher marks for 6917 as the unit is well established, however, many candidates take a "tick box" approach to coverage and by so doing cover the requirements but the resultant work is often not a quality portfolio.

Areas of the Specification

Strand A

Strand A is made up of a range of topics that candidates need to investigate:

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 and missed the other legal implications for the business, e.g. nurseries, playgroups & the legal requirements for working with children. However, a number of those candidates that covered businesses selling food did attempt some coverage of food handling and preparation legislation. The work was often basic and the wider legal aspect related to taxation, VAT and consumer legislation 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. Candidates were often unable to identify an appropriate pricing strategy and those that did simply gave theoretical definitions of skimming, penetration, etc.

Market research: As part of the market research questionnaires were usually used but in many cases the sample did not reflect the target market for the product/ service in demographic terms. Once the questionnaires were completed, candidates often produced graphs of the results and described the results but did not analyse the outcomes. The research was usually quite good but many candidates did not analyse the data collected in sufficient depth, many did not use it as a basis for their decisions. 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.

Increasingly many centres tried to complete the same course work for 6917 & 6918 or use the same business/ product for these two units, many centres submitted marketing mixes, segmentation, etc. for this unit although these are not required.

Strand B

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 implement TQM. Human resources and

financial resources were often only briefly covered with the greatest emphasis being put on physical resources.

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.

Strand B should be used to provide evidence of costs, capacity and sales for the financial documents in strand C. In some centres statements were often general, not related to the business and not justified. The management of resources aspects, i.e. the costs, sources and availability, were not always covered. A number of candidates tended to list items that are either start up or running costs in this section but fail to give the costs of these. A number of candidates did not carry expenditure details through to Strand C.

Strand C

For strand C, candidates usually calculated cash flow and breakeven but the monitoring aspects were rarely covered. An increasing number of candidates produce other financial documents, e.g. Balance Sheets, Profit & Loss accounts, etc. 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, costs of resources in strand B. Many figures were unrealistic. Again work was often limited to mark band 1/ low mark band 2. 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. One centre was extremely harsh on assessing this strand giving low mark band 1 marks that were adjusted to mid to high mark band 3 marks.

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

Strand D

Strand D was often treated as an "add on" and was not always 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 Databases, 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.

Grade Boundaries - January 2010

6917	Total	A	B	C	D	E
Raw Mark	60	49	43	37	31	26
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40

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