

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Applied Business (6921)
Paper 01

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Publications Code UA027323

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INVESTIGATING PROMOTION

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

This paper considered two main businesses for the first two thirds of the marks. The first scenario related to a promotion by *Coca Cola* offering freshers the opportunity of winning their university fees and other prizes. The second scenario related to *Redpath Cards* promoting to retail outlets. Candidates related well to both scenarios. Question 7 was of a more general nature about the use of trade marks and the ethical decisions that businesses make.

Questions 8 to 10 required an understanding of how specific real businesses actually carry out their promotions. Question 8 was about informative and persuasive promotion, question 9 about aerial promotions and question 10 about small businesses advertising in local papers. All questions were accessible and well answered by candidate who read each part of the questions carefully.

Unfortunately the usual perennial weaknesses remain, despite them being flagged up after every series. They are:

- Not reading the questions carefully enough
- Not considering the context of the question in sufficient depth
- Not understanding some very basic terminologies
- Not considering the number of marks being awarded for a question
- Writing to the space provided, especially for candidates with large handwriting.
- Not developing answers.

Comments on specific questions

1 (a)

Many candidates recognised the play on words used by *Coca Cola* and identified BOGOF, with the prize of 'fees' instead of 'free'. Only the better candidates went on to clearly tie this to the target audience of students.

Some candidates ignored the phrase 'choice of words' and wrote about general objectives of getting students to drink coke. Some focused on the fact that the letters were in capitals. Some candidates gave a list of likely objectives, even though the question had only asked for 'a likely objective'. Where candidates lost marks on this relatively easy question it came from not reading the questions carefully enough, a fault often repeated in Q1(b).

1 (b)

The most common fault here was where candidates did not write about the value of the prizes to be won, but about how often they could be won, hence attracting more students to enter the competition. This approach gained 0 marks because it did not answer the question. Nearly 40% of candidates did not consider the value of the prizes at all.

Where candidates did relate their answers to the value of the prizes, they either gave general answers, which gained them 2 marks, or applied answers which used the actual prizes being offered to support their points, which gained them the full 4 marks.

1 (c)

This was well answered by nearly all candidates. Most candidates took the approach of texting being a very common form of communication for students, whilst most of the rest either took the approach of the creation of a useful database for future promotions or possible payments being received by *Coca Cola* from the texting charges.

There were a few candidates who read the question as asking them why *Coca Cola* had targeted students. This was a little out of context and did not really fit with the idea of investigating promotion.

2 (a) (i)

The answers to this question had to relate to the placing of the posters on the university campuses, in the cafes and common rooms. It did not refer to the nature of the advertisement on the posters. Many candidates seemed to grab for the first feature of ambient media they could think of and then try to justify it in terms of the posters. Many argued that placing posters in university cafes and common rooms was unusual or quirky. Others argued that the posters were not moving or were not outside. The answers to this question, and part (ii), suggests that many candidates have a very poor understanding of exactly what is, or not, ambient advertising.

Candidates, who selected the expected feature of being in the target's environment, or even out of the home environment, gave good answers to part (i).

2 (a) (ii)

Few candidates used the argument that this was inside the home environment, because students lived on campus. About 20% of candidates gave the reason that posters were not an unusual medium, but only a few of these candidates went on to say that they were not unusual in the location of the cafes and/or common rooms. Some candidates argued that posters were print medium and therefore could not be ambient. Again this shows a very poor understanding of what ambient media means, and also suggests that candidates do not appreciate that the many forms of promotional media are not automatically mutually exclusive. Only the very best candidate scored full marks for parts (i) and (ii).

2 (b)

As with part (a) there were candidates who ignored the need to write about where the posters were placed and simply wrote about why posters would not be a good way of advertising.

The question did require candidates to consider the specific locations given, the cafe and/or the common room. This was not a question about placing the posters in dark corners, or in other parts of a university campus. Most candidates did identify where the posters were actually placed and then

gave good reasons as to the nature of those locations and why that might mean the posters effectiveness might be negatively affected. Few candidates gave a fully developed answer for maximum marks.

3

Where candidates understood the terms 'public relations' and evaluated the campaign in terms of public relations they gave good answers, but a significant proportion of candidates, about 20%, ignored the public relations element altogether and simply assessed the campaign as a general form of promotion.

Most candidates dealing with PR gave good reasons for the campaign showing *Cola Cola* in a positive light and tied this to the benefits for the students, their families and education in general. Few went on to consider negative elements of the campaign, such as the potential distractions of the Nintendo DSis or the fact that only university freshers were being offered the fees, and thereby ignored the requirement to 'evaluate'. There were some very well argued answers that covered a good range of positive and negative points.

4

Nearly all candidates could give a reason for the offer of the display racks and spinners by *Redpath* to the retailers. Explanations were often rather brief and the candidates who scored full marks had usually considered more than one benefit to *Redpath* of doing this.

5 (a)

Very few candidates were unable to select one of the features of the brochure from the stem to Q5. Only the best candidates then gave fully argued points as to why the selected feature would be a benefit to *Redpath*. Marks were generally lost (i) by not developing the explanations, often simply falling back on the statement that therefore *Redpath* would sell more cards and make more profits (but with no real explanation of why this was a result of the feature), or (ii) by writing about two or more features, even though the question had clearly stated that only one of characteristic should be taken.

5 (b)

Most candidates knew the basic functions of sales reps and were able to give examples of how they would promote *Redpath's* cards. Few candidates took their answers on to explain why the sales reps would be needed in addition to the brochures. That required them to outline limitations of the brochures. The best candidates did do this and scored full marks.

6

This question required reference to the information given on Figure 2. A few candidates made no reference to that information, nor to the product produced by *Redpath*, nor to how it sold its cards, i.e. to retailers. These candidates did not get beyond Level 1. Other candidates limited their answers to general drawbacks of television advertising, such as the cost, and tried to tie the information in Figure 1 to those drawbacks.

The approach needed was to consider the nature of the product, greetings cards, or the current method of selling, to retailers, and then look at appropriate features of television advertising, identifying appropriate drawbacks. Many candidates did do that and produced good Level 2 answers.

For Level 3, candidates needed to consider the nature of television advertising in much greater depth, with reference to *Redpath's* product or the selling of the cards to retailers. The better candidates could do this, but generally that detail was missing.

At Level 4 candidates should have considered possible positive points for using television advertising, responding to the instruction to 'discuss'. A few candidates did do this, but that was the exception. There were a significant number of candidates who argued that, because *Redpath* supplied retailers there was no role, no benefit, of advertising on television because producers of products did not do that unless they had their own retail outlets. This showed a lamentable understanding of the real world of business.

7 (a) (i) & (ii)

There was a tendency with a significant number of candidates to state the obvious, that a trust mark meant the business was trusted and that a quality mark meant the business produced a quality product. Such a simplistic approach did not gain a mark. Candidates that checked the stem, and noted the fact that the marks require authorisation gained two fairly easy marks. However, a significant number of these candidates stated that it was the CAP that gave the authority, both misunderstanding the role of CAP and what the stem to Q7 had stated. Other candidates failed to gain marks because they related these trade marks to advertising and not to the products being sold.

There were also some good answers, especially ones that supported their statements of the meaning with examples of the actual marks being used by business.

7 (b)

This was not well answered by the majority of candidates, very few of who understand the term ethical and even those candidates who did understand the terms generally converted the reasons into either legal, e.g. the firm might get fined, or commercial, e.g. if the business did not do this it would lose customers and profit. The question had asked why a business might take an ethical stance and that should have focused on the business's belief that that was the right thing to do in terms of a moral decision.

Some candidates started their answers by stating what ethical meant and these candidates were generally the ones who then went on to consider the ethical reasons behind the business's decision. However, many candidates stating the meaning then drifted into legal or commercial arguments.

Questions 8 to 10

As required for these questions it must be clear that candidates are dealing with real businesses, but there are some candidates who do not have sufficient knowledge of real promotional campaigns that match the questions. When they are being asked to describe, assess, explain, etc, what actually happened in the campaign they are giving generalised details of what could have happened rather than actual details of what did happen. These questions expect candidates to have studied real promotional campaigns and to use knowledge of these to answer the questions. Without this knowledge, the potential marks will be considerable reduced.

Q8

Generally candidates could give examples of both informative and persuasive promotion, but for both parts (a) and (b) there was generally little explanation to show how the promotion provided information or lead to persuasion. Some candidates were unable to identify any informative promotion and wrote about persuasion for both parts of the answer. Many candidates did not attempt to give different forms of promotion for the information and persuasion aspects, as stated in the stem. This made it more difficult for them to draw clear distinctions between the two objectives of promotion.

Many candidates clearly wanted to take an example from some situation with which they were familiar, probably in terms of their own shopping. The best approach, which only a few candidates took, was to think of forms of promotion that only inform, and use this for part (a), and then take a completely different form of promotion, with heavy persuasive elements, for part (b). Only the best candidates gave developed answers and gained high marks.

Q9

Few candidates failed to identify a suitable form of aerial promotion although a very small minority did go for inappropriate promotions such as billboards, planes sitting on runways and even balloons on sticks.

Generally part (a) was well answered, with distinct features of the actual aerial promotion given. Details of the location were not acceptable as that was being asked for in part (b). Some candidates did not give details but, instead, explained why the business was using aerial promotion.

Part (b) required a specific location for the actual aerial promotional campaign being used. Where candidates gave this they then nearly always gave good reasons for the location. A significant number of candidates did not refer to any specific location but just wrote generally about the importance of location for promotional materials. This limited their possible marks to 2 marks.

Part (c) was usually well answered, but fairly large minority of candidates insisted on giving two or more constraints, when only one had been asked for. Only the best candidates responded to the command word 'assess' and gave well considered assessments of the chosen constraint to gain full marks.

Q10

Most candidates did select a suitable business and local paper, but there were some candidates who chose a national business and some candidates who chose national papers such as the Times and the Sun. Where candidates chose national papers they failed to score any marks on part (a).

Part (a) asked for two reasons for choosing the local paper. Few candidates had problems with this, but a significant number only gave one reason. There were a worrying number of candidates who gave the reason for choosing the local 'free paper' as being the fact that it would be free for the business to place the advertisements there. This is very unusual for free papers, which make their money out of business advertisements and it suggests that students have not actually studied this form of promotion in any real depth.

Part (b) was also generally well answered but candidates tended to simply state particular features of the advertisement and why that would help to make the advertisement stand out. Only the best candidates went on to give clear details of competitors' advertising to explain why their chosen businesses' advertisements would have more impact.

Most limitations for part (c) did deal with the nature of the chosen newspaper itself, but a significant minority of candidates wrote about either the limitations of the advertisement that the business was placing, e.g. did not use colour, or about newspapers in general, e.g. people may only read the headlines and throw the paper away. Only the best candidates responded to the requirement to say 'to what extent' the promotion had been limited.

Issues for future series

The points listed below repeat comments made in previous reports, but they are ones that are still **not** being addressed by many candidates – hence marks are being lost unnecessarily.

(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 – Candidates need to know all of the terms given in the syllabus **and** common terms that relate to the real world of promotion.

(3) Reading the question/following instructions – Many marks are still being unnecessarily lost, simply because candidates have not read the question carefully enough or taken the context into consideration.

(4) Questions requiring extended answers – There will continue to be two questions with 11 marks in the future series. Students should be shown how to develop their answers so that they can provide in-depth and detailed answers for these questions.

(5) Questions based on own study – Students must be able to use knowledge and understanding of a wide range of real promotional situations in order to answer questions on any part of the syllabus. This must be in sufficient depth to show clear details of the promotional campaigns.

Please also note the comments made about online marking in previous reports and the comments made about writing only to the space provided on the paper itself. Centres need to ensure that their candidates are not being disadvantaged simply because of the layout of the paper. Additional work outside of the specified area on the paper, or on additional sheets, is totally acceptable, but, when this is done, it is vital that the candidates indicate somewhere on their answer to a specific question that they are using additional paper or completing the answer somewhere else in the actual booklet. Preferably, they also indicate where the rest of the answer is.

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Order Code June 2011 UA027323

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