

Version



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2011**

Business Studies

BUSS3

(Specification 2130)

Unit 3: Strategies for Success

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on **the Examination** are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2011 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

General Comments

The paper proved to be accessible with the majority of candidates able to attempt each of the questions. As with previous papers, the strongest candidates were those who:

- revealed good understanding of the concepts being examined
- were able to identify and analyse relevant arguments, supported by selective use of material from the case study
- revealed impressive skills of evaluation by writing conclusions that were focused on the actual question set.

However, it is of concern that a significant number of candidates appeared to have spent insufficient time in gaining an appreciation of the case study before attempting the questions. Consequently, there were many answers which revealed misunderstanding of the issues faced by the business in the case study. Whilst it is appreciated that candidates are working under stressful exam conditions, it is important that centres emphasise to their candidates that they should spend at least the first 15 minutes reading and analysing the case study material before attempting the questions.

Question One

Overall, this question was well answered with the majority of candidates able to identify the operational problems relating to high levels of capacity utilisation and declining quality. There was a significant variation between candidates in terms of their ability to develop a line of argument from their initial points. The skill of application was less evident, with only a minority of candidates appreciating that the order was for an exclusive range of products for the Chinese department store.

Common mistakes were that candidates would often identify and explain HR or marketing problems rather than operational. Also, many candidates wasted time by offering solutions to the problems that they had identified.

Question Two

Although the focus of this question was on how well the dispute regarding the introduction of new technology had been resolved, many candidates failed to recognise this. Instead, these candidates either discussed the merits of relocating production to China or the arguments for and against the adoption of new technology. These candidates were able to access marks for content, application and analysis, but failed to gain the higher level marks for evaluation as they had not answered the actual question set. Candidates gaining the highest marks discussed how well the actual dispute had been resolved and suggested alternative solutions such as involving ACAS.

Question Three

This question differentiated between those candidates who had spent time understanding the case study and those who had not. The best candidates revealed good understanding of Ansoff's matrix in assessing the relative risk of developing new products for the Chinese market as opposed to continuing to sell the existing ones. They also made effective use of the case study material to back up their arguments.

Weaker candidates revealed misconceptions such as the company would only sell in China and no longer in the EU and US markets. Also, many candidates believed that the company would simply abandon its existing products in all of its markets.

Question Four

Although the majority of candidates were able to write creditable answers, many did not focus on the actual question set by assessing how well the strategy had met its objectives. The strongest candidates were able to identify a range of relevant arguments and to develop a good line of analysis for each of them, and made effective use of the case study material to illustrate their arguments.

Weaker candidates would often simply describe a list of relevant points but fail to analyse them. The data in the appendices would often be repeated with only a limited attempt to analyse its significance. A few candidates reiterated answers from Question Two.

It is disappointing to report that many candidates failed to provide any financial arguments, despite the fact that they were encouraged to use numerical evidence and were also provided with accounting information. Those candidates who correctly calculated relevant ratios were usually able to provide stronger answers, although the interpretation of the calculations continues to be variable.

Summary

The two key lessons that centres should learn from this paper are:

- the importance of spending time at the beginning of the exam in gaining a good understanding of the case study
- that candidates must keep their answers focused on the actual question set.

Good exam technique is also crucial. The ability to provide good understanding of the concepts being examined, to identify and analyse selective arguments backed up by effective use of the case study material, and to write sound conclusions which directly address the question set will always be rewarded with high marks.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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