Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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(6BSA3) Paper 01 International
Business

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International Advanced Level Business Studies (6BSA3) January 2014

General comments

This paper proved to be a good discriminator with a couple of quite testing questions. Many students were able to demonstrate a good theoretical understanding, backed up by good use of example, often taken from wider reading rather than the paper itself. Other students found some concepts such as trade barriers and global niches difficult to apply. Other answers were rather tangled and at times it was not always clear just what students meant.

Some students weakened their responses by failing to apply the terms and theory they had been taught, using generalities and non-specialist language. This does not convince examiners that answers deserve high reward. For example, forecasting that sales for JLR would "be massive", or that "they will do well" is unlikely to gain marks for analysis. Similarly, a large proportion thought that Africa was a country.

The main reasons for otherwise able students underachieving are the usual ones of not heeding command words and not reading the questions carefully enough. Command words are still being ignored by a sizeable number. Instructions to 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' were not followed by some students.

Significant numbers of students missed out on marks because they did not answer the question that was set. This was particularly the case with questions 5 and 9. Very few students failed to finish all the questions.

Specific comments

Question 1

A good introductory question and well answered by most students who were able to identify two possible problems and develop the consequences. Language barriers and cultural differences were the most common choices.

Question 2

Most students were able to suggest two possible reasons for JLR's strong worldwide sales but some did struggle to provide a convincing second reason. Of those that did supply two good reasons many did not always develop their answers to obtain full marks. There are two analysis marks available per reason and few seemed able to access the second analytical point.

Question 3

Most students were familiar with the idea of a joint venture and the benefits it could bring to JLR and Chery. Assessing that decision was rather more difficult with many giving a superficial and/or generic response that was lacking in specific reference to either the businesses or market concerned.

Question 4

A large number of students were able to analyse the benefits to JLR of being able to adapt their products to local tastes with some very good use of the context supplied in stimulus material. Many continued on to evaluation but this was often a theoretical consideration of adapting to local tastes. Only a small number were able to place this in to an appropriate context for a business such as JLR. Few students were able to develop this evaluation to show likely long term implications or discuss other approaches that could be useful, eg that the whole point of a brand such as JLR was to create an international brand and so by adapting to local tastes this dilutes the brand and has a potential negative impact.

Question 5

This question was by and large very poorly answered. Although knowledge of trade barriers was good, most students struggled with linking a reduction in these barriers to growth and development. Even those that did show the linkages failed to apply it successfully to African countries.

Question 6

By contrast, this was a much better answered question; most students understood the reasons for inorganic growth and applied it to Marico and the hair-care market.

Question 7

A reasonable number of students were able to use specific examples to analyse the importance of infrastructure in attracting FDI and better answers had good contextual analysis. However the evaluation was not always perceptive with students mainly failing to look at issues such as large untapped markets. This may have been due to students' lack of knowledge about Africa though the sources had plenty of context that could have been used in answers.

Question 8

Students were generally well versed on the benefits of operating in a global niche market and made good use of the context provided to highlight this. Evaluation was generally theoretical but some students were able to contextualise this such as by focusing on the low average earnings in Africa. Very few students were able to develop this evaluation in terms of for example, the long term outlook for niche markets in Africa and perhaps first mover advantage.

Question 9

Most students were able to analyse and evaluate the likely benefits and risks to MNCs in entering this untapped market. Some responses were very short, perhaps due to lack of time or knowledge. Some students developed their answer with relevant context but few answers were able to access the full marks of this question. Some students misread the question and actually answered this the wrong way round i.e. from the point of view of the benefits for African countries of MNCs entering their markets, unfortunately such answers received very little credit.

Based on their performance on this paper, students are offered the following advice:

• Do read the question carefully and answer the question that is set
• Do watch out for command words such as Assess or Evaluate
• Do use examples to illustrate your argument
• Do use the language of the subject and avoid generalities
• Do watch your timing and do not spend too long on one question
• Do write concisely
• Do add a conclusion to the longer questions

Grade Boundaries

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http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx