



June 2018

Level 3 National in 31489H Developing a Marketing Campaign

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What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we set the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade, at Distinction, Merit, Pass and Near Pass (N grade).

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the external assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries – this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark is for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to ensure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

Variations in external assessments

Each external assessment we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries for each assessment, because then it would not take accessibility into account.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, are on the website via this link:
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Unit 2 – Developing a Marketing Campaign – 31489H

Grade	Level 3		
	P	M	D
Boundary Mark	26	41	56

Introduction

This was the third opportunity for candidates to sit this unit.

The Part A pre-release for this unit directed learners to research the market for vinyl records and to collect data that could be used to plan a marketing campaign. The requirements for the campaign and the business it would be developed for were then provided in Part B. Collecting relevant data is essential for the successful completion of Part B. Learners are able to take 6 pages of notes collated in Part A into the Part B supervised session. Following a trend that started in the January 2018 series, the volume of data presented by learners in Part B increased this series. However, as will be discussed in more depth in this report, this did not necessarily equate to better quality rationales or marketing campaign plans.

This unit is synoptic within all versions of the level three business qualification. Therefore, when setting grade boundaries it is expected that learners should be able to use content from other internal and external units studied when completing this set task. For example, learners should use the knowledge of budgeting gained from unit 3, Personal and Business Finance, when completing a budget for their marketing campaign. This series has seen an increase in the amount of content from other units used in this task. For example, more learners are supplementing their SWOT/PESTLE analysis with other analytical models from other units. Porters Five Forces is still popular, but some learners are now starting to use models such as the 5C's. However, the quality of how these analytical models are applied varies greatly. Learners and teachers should remember that key to success in this unit is the application of theory to the given context which begins with being able to analyse the data collected within the context of the task presented in Part B.

The assessment of this unit is based on 8 assessment focuses, each carrying a different weight. The assessment foci are split into two groups of four with activity one worth 34 marks and activity two worth 36 marks. In activity one, the majority of marks are spread across three of the four assessment focuses. Collectively, these account for 42% of the total marks for the assessment) and are divided between:

- marketing aims and objectives – 8 marks,
- research and analysis of market information – 12 marks
- justification – 10 marks.

In activity two, the majority of the marks are split across just two of the four assessment focuses. Collectively, these account for 41% of the total marks and are:

- the marketing mix and assessment – 20 marks
- budget – 8 marks.

Learners were required to produce their work using a computer. An increasing number of centres submitted work electronically on a USB memory stick. Electronic submission of work is welcomed, however, centres are reminded that as with hard copy submission it is the centres responsibility to ensure all work produced by the learner is submitted. Pearson cannot take responsibility for work that has not been submitted and failing to accurately submit work may result in learners not being awarded marks for work that while they legitimately

completed but was not actually submitted to the examiner by the centre.

A minority of centres are still submitting work without completing the relevant authentication sheets and mark summary sheets for each candidate. Centres should review the administrative support guide for this unit to ensure that all administrative requirements are met when submitting work. This is essential to avoid delays in the assessment of candidates work and can risk a delay in being able to report results either to centres on results day or to other organisations such as UCAS prior to results day.

A small minority of centres are still submitting work to their standards verifiers. Standards Verifiers play no role in the assessment of externally assessed units. Centres are reminded that Pearson will provide pre-printed address labels to ensure that work is sent to the correct address. Failure to submit learners evidence to the correct address may result in delays to the assessment of learners work and the timely reporting of results.

Finally, this report will explore the impact of centres decisions about when to enter learners for this synoptic unit. Over 58% of learners entered in this series were in Year 12. Centres are reminded that this unit is a synoptic unit and, therefore, not intended to be sat until learners have completed other associated units. Centres should be aware of this when making decisions about when to enter their learners and should consider if their learners will be appropriately prepared for the assessment in Year 12.

Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

Work produced by approximately 16,000 learners was assessed during this window. Learners achieved between 0 and 70 marks. Learners took a range of different approaches to completing the set task and again, evidence from learners work suggested that centres had used information in previous examiners reports in order to prepare for this assessment window. In particular, more centres appear to be allowing learners access to an electronic copy of their Part A notes while they complete the set task. In some cases, learners made use of electronic notes well with learners copying tables of data into their assignments which they then went on to analyse. Unfortunately, some learners were reported for suspected malpractice because they had attempted to pre-prepare elements of the assessment such as their timeline or budget. Centres are reminded that they are responsible for ensuring that learners notes comply with the guidelines set out in the assessment itself and the Administrative Support Guide for the unit. Where learners notes do not comply learners those aspects of the notes should not be made available to the learner in the Part B supervised assessment. Where evidence of malpractice is identified sanctions are imposed either at individual learner or centre level.

As with the January 2018 series, a clear pattern is emerging which demonstrates that despite having significantly lower prior attainment than their Year 12 counterparts, Year 13 learners still averaged a similar mean mark. It should be remembered that this is a level 3 unit and so is set at a level equivalent to A Level rather than AS level. This would suggest that other factors which would support learners to achieve their potential should be considered and would include:

1. maturity of the learner, eg their ability to think and/or write concisely yet analytically
2. being better prepared by having a broader range and greater depth of business knowledge that can be applied to the set task.

A particularly common practice during this series was for learners to copy large amounts of research from their notes into their set task without undertaking any further analysis. This tended to limit the marks achieved by learners to mark bands one and two for assessment focus three. Centres are reminded that research should be analysed by learners and should be used to underpin a range of different elements of the set task – for example, higher marks are more likely to be achieved for AF2 (Aims and Objectives) and AF5 (the Marketing Mix) when learners have used research data selectively to support and justify their decision making. Consequently, such learners often failed to meet the grade boundary for pass as their work failed to display consideration to the context in which the assessment was set.

Many learners are still appear to be failing to balance their time appropriately between activity one and activity two in part b. Many learners produce significantly more work for Activity 1 ('The Rationale') than for Activity 2 ('The Marketing Plan'). In many cases, this appears to be because learners are running out of time as a result of copying out large amounts of research and consequently many are still omitting timelines and budgets which accounts for a total of 12 marks (17%) of the total marks available for the task. Activity one carries 34 marks and activity two carries 36 marks. Learners should, therefore, produce roughly equal amounts of work for each, with slightly more time and attention given to activity two. Many learners are instead spending large amounts of time describing large amounts of research data, which they use unselectively, before producing a marketing mix that often appears to be an afterthought as a result of being either generic or uncontextualised. This severely limits the number of marks that can be achieved and does not display evidence of the grade descriptor for pass.

A particular weakness of the marketing mix produced by learners is still a lack of contextualisation. For a piece of work to achieve marks in band three or four for assessment focus five, learners must ensure that all of the elements of their proposed marketing mix are placed in the context of the business identified in Part B, in this case a small record shop with a limited budget for promotion. Many learners simply suggest generic marketing activities without any link to the context of the business. For example, for price, learners simply include the theory of different pricing strategies without showing why they think that these might be appropriate. There are also weaknesses in the understanding of the extended marketing mix in many pieces of work. For example, during this series learners often wrote about target market rather than customer service staff under people in the extended marketing mix for this business. Similarly, for Budget, learners are still often giving lists of generic rate card costs without linking this to the marketing activities suggested in their marketing mix. A minority of learners are recognising that both the budget and timescale should be based the activities proposed in the marketing mix.

As with the January series, a common error made by learners was to write about the manufacturing of vinyl records. Precise details of the process of making records, often lifted from Wikipedia, were included in a significant number of the set tasks submitted. Centres are reminded that learners should be prepared to read the part B description carefully and should ensure that they focus on issues that are relevant to the business described in that document. Learners should be selective in their use of data and should only include information from their research that is relevant to context – in this case a retail business that sells finished goods to the end user.

Finally, over 58% of learners entered in this series were in Year 12. As this unit is designed to be a synoptic unit in all qualification sizes it is expected that learners will be able to draw on what they have learnt in other units to help inform their decision making. Assuming that centres have delivered to learners Unit 1 (which is

identified in the specification as being the underpinning introductory unit to be delivered before others) then it unlikely that learners will have also benefitted from other units such as:

- Unit 3: Personal and Business Finance,
- Unit 4: Managing an Event,
- Unit 5: International Business,
- Unit 14: Investigating Customer Service,
- Unit 17: Digital Marketing,
- Unit 22: Market Research.

Centres are strongly encouraged to review their strategies for making entries in Year 12 carefully to ensure that learners entered for the assessment, and who are therefore using up an assessment opportunity, are appropriately prepared and have been able to practice putting their knowledge and understanding into practice in unfamiliar scenarios.

Assessment Focus One: Structure

Marks gained for this focus related to three key aspects of learners work on Activity One:

- the structure of the work
- the accurate use of marketing principles and concepts
- the accurate use of technical vocabulary

Most learners achieved either three marks for this assessment focus, having been able to provide a clear structure to their work, often using the headings from the instructions for Activity One in order to do so.

A minority of learners are using headings based on their research to complete their assignment. For example, a popular revision website published a list of sources of secondary data. In a small number of cases learners summarised these articles. While this provided a clear structure, this approach tended to limit the marks achieved for other assessment foci.

Where learners gain lower marks for this assessment focus, it tends to be because of a lack of technical vocabulary and weak use of marketing principles and concepts. Learners should link their research data to relevant material from the specification. Where they fail to do so, their work for this assessment focus will be limited to marks in band one or two.

Assessment Focus Two: Marketing Aims and Objectives

Marks were gained for this focus on the basis of two key pieces of evidence:

- The production of appropriate marketing aims and objectives, relevant to a marketing campaign for a music retailer
- The provision of a rationale for the proposed aims and objectives.

Many learners are still writing generic business aims and objectives without any link to context. For example, "The business will increase revenue by 10% within a year". This type of generic comment cannot achieve more than four marks. In some cases, learners were able to build on this by using data from their research to suggest why a 10% increase in revenue might be appropriate – e.g. by highlighting the growth in vinyl sales nationally and the relatively high price of these items. This elevated work that was otherwise generic into mark band three.

Learners achieving a mark in band 4 were able to identify key points from the Part B case study such as:

- A small business targeting a specific geographical area
- A relatively small marketing budget of £8000
- A campaign length determined by the learner
- A range of complementary products offered for sale by the business

It is not necessary for learners to have identified all of these points, but at least some should have been used in order to provide the justification that is required to achieve marks in and above band 2 for this assessment focus.

The best pieces of work for this assessment focus typically provided two or three well contextualized SMART objectives with a justification that made use of research data.

In the example below, the learner achieved a mark in band three for this work because although the objective is SMART and uses data to provide a justification, the objective is not realistic – a small independent shop gaining an 8% share of the market in the face of competition from firms such as Sainsbury, Tesco and Amazon seems highly implausible – and since the learner has not provided any evidence that this might be possible, the work is placed in mark band three.

As a second aim that Wax perfection should target is to achieve a market share of 8% by 2020. This is because research shows how there's been a 26.8% increase year on year which pushes vinyl sales to a level not seen since the days of Nirvana's Never mind in the early nineties and the sales of vinyl records that once passed one million units a year in 2014 for the first time in 1996. This means that because of the success and increase in sales the market is receiving, Wax perfection have an increased likelihood of gaining a positive revenue which overall will lead to their profit margins being positively impacted also, as they gain popularity. By targeting the male population Wax perfection will be more able to reach this aim for statistics show that in 2017 61% of the male population who consume vinyl records were responsible for purchasing 62%.

R
AF2

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Assessment Focus Three: Research and analysis of Marketing Information

Work for this assessment focus was based on how well:

- 1) Learners made reference to the case study data in the Part B task brief
- 2) Learners demonstrated that they had gathered their own research data into the market for vinyl records
- 3) Learners analysed their research data
- 4) Learners had considered the validity and reliability of their research data

Weaker pieces of work tended to contain large amounts of data that were not analysed by learners. Long lists of facts and figures from websites are now commonly supplemented with diagrams that have been cut and pasted from research notes. For the second series in a row, many learners only used a single source for their research – a blog post on a popular business studies revision website. In many cases, learners have taken data from the articles listed in the blog post and simply regurgitated large quantities of data without attempting to provide any meaningful analysis. This has become more common than it had previously been in January 2018 and represents a concerning trend – learners appear to be doing less research and using fewer sources of data, while at the same time not attempting to consider what the findings of research is telling them.

The use of primary data has increased, with more learners showing evidence of having carried out small scale surveys. In the best pieces of work, learners used the small scale of their research as the basis of sophisticated comments on the validity of their data. An increasing number of learners are using their choice of sampling strategy to explain why their data might or might not be reliable.

Weaker pieces of work gained marks in band one or potentially band two because data was included with no evidence of the learner analysing this material and no evidence that they had attempted to demonstrate any selectivity – ie large amounts of material from their notes were simply copied into the assignment without regard for the context presented in Part B.

Learners need to be aware that saying whether something will be good or bad for the business identified in the Part B brief is not sufficient to qualify as analysis. Learners need to be encouraged to use their knowledge of business theory to examine why issues in the external environment might or might not benefit the business. It is possible that decisions about entering learners for assessments before they have completed other units such as Unit 1 might contribute to learners not having a solid grasp of these issues and so may be contributing to some learners not performing as well as might be expected for this assessment focus.

In this example, a learner has provided an extensive list of different pieces of information but has not analysed any of this data and therefore, this piece of work would be placed into mark band one:

Direct competitors of wax perfection include local record stores such as Tome Records, Love Vinyl, Eldica, Lobster Records & Distribution, Vinyl Pimp and Kristina Records. They are all direct competitors because they offer the same products such as the Ed Sheeran 'divide' record. The main direct competition for wax perfection is HMV and according to a quote from hmv on Cityam "When it comes to vinyl sales hmv have over four times the market share of Sainsbury's from a range of up to 1,500 records in each of our 128 stores". However, mirror UK says "HMV is to close another 37 stores resulting in a loss of almost 500 jobs, it confirmed". This means that Sainsbury's could be the biggest competition for wax perfection because according to Cityam "the supermarket said that it has more stores, 171, selling vinyls than any other retailer". However, According to the telegraph UK 73% of music purchases now take place online. Amazon leads the field with a 27 per cent market share, followed by iTunes on 18 per cent and supermarkets on 10 per cent. Only 7% of sales take place on the high street. On the other hand, wax perfection have the competitive advantage of being able to quickly understand new trends in order to continuously satisfy current customers and attain new customers. R AF3

This paragraph includes information from four different sources. The learner could have used their time better by picking one or two of those sources and analysing the significance of the data to Wax Perfection. For example, they could have examined whether or not the closure of HMV stores is good or bad for the business – perhaps focusing on the fact that this may mean less competition (and the potential implications of this) on the one hand, and balancing this against the possible causes of the store closures (e.g. competition from online retailers with lower cost bases and the implications of this). The increasing trend for learners to include huge quantities of data with little analysis is concerning. Learners would achieve higher marks by focusing on a more in depth analysis of fewer pieces of information.

In this example, this piece of work would be awarded a mark in band two – although the learner has demonstrated an analytical approach in this paragraph, the analysis is not detailed and therefore the work could not move into mark band three:

Trends:

- Sales of CDs have continued to fall in recent years as music consumers have migrated to digital formats and music streaming services. This is because people are turning to streaming devices as an alternative to free music. In 2012, the volume of CD sales accounted for 69.4% but by 2017 it reduced to 41.6%. This is important to Wax perfection for it shows the decline in sales of music that is in the physical format. Therefore this may impact how successful the revenue of their vinyl records will be. R AF3

On the whole, consideration of validity and reliability remains weak. An alarming number of candidates seem to regard this as a single concept rather than two different ones. Learners often make simple throw away remarks such as “I collected this data recently” or “it came from this website” as a means to justify their research being both valid and reliable.

Some candidates were able to cover validity and reliability well. In this example, from a piece of work that achieved a mark in band four for this assessment focus overall, the candidate explains, albeit imperfectly, some of the issues that might affect the extent to which their data will represent their target market accurately (validity) and could be reproduced independently (reliability).

However, these results may not be valid as they only included people from England, not the whole of the UK; Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were not investigated. Also, the survey did not gather an equal number of results from all regions, this could make it less valid as people from other regions that were not asked may have had different results. In the survey there is no question to ask what gender the respondent is, this could have shown market trends for different genders, as it is shown in the secondary research that males are more likely to buy vinyls. Only 100 people were sent the survey, this could make it less reliable as more people could have shown different results, however, the survey can easily be repeated as they are close-ended questions, so may not have different results. The survey is appropriate as it asks questions that link to what we want to find out; also it is not unethical, as it does not cause any harm or distress to the respondents. For currency the data is up to date; as the survey has been sent out this year, secondary research is more likely to have results that were collected in the past and may be inaccurate. The online survey did not cost anything as it was online, which means it was free to conduct, however this may also make it less valid as people who do not access the internet do not have the opportunity to respond.

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Assessment Focus Four: Justification

For this assessment focus, the following evidence was required:

- The use of two or more analytical tools
- An evaluation of the meaning of the research gathered
- A justification for the use of specific marketing techniques based on the analysis of research data

SWOT and PESTLE remain the most commonly used analytical models, but the number of learners using the Product Life Cycle, Five forces, and the 5C's is increasing, particularly the use of the product life cycle model.

It is now relatively rare for learners to only use one analytical model, although this does still occur. It is now more common for learners to use three or more models. It is possible, that this is causing learners to spend more time on activity one to the detriment of activity two. Learners are advised that they should be selective in their use of analytical models for this assessment focus. Although a minimum of two are needed to move into mark bands three and four, there may be little benefit in adding additional models – learners should focus on using fewer models well.

Weaker pieces of work still include SWOT and PESTLE analysis that list large amounts of data without any further analysis. This can only be awarded marks in band one or two. In order to move into mark bands three and four, learners need to ensure that they:

- Evaluate the data presented
- Fully contextualise their evaluation – e.g. they must show how the data that they have selected is relevant to Wax Perfection.

The use of product life cycle by learners has been especially weak. Rather than focusing on the stage in the model that has currently been reached by vinyl records (or indeed other products offered by Wax Perfection), a significant number of learners have used information about the history of vinyl records from different websites and tried to apply this to the different stages of the model. This example shows one of the more concise cases of this:

All products go through a product lifecycle which includes the four stages, the introduction to the market, growth, maturity and decline. The invention of the first vinyl record can be traced back to the 1800's. It was a flat disc that played music acoustically for 2-3 minutes. Then in 1925 electric amplifiers and microphones were added to create better sound effects. In 1948 longer play was integrated into the development of vinyl. Vinyl records increased in popularity in the 1950's all the way to the 1990's. During this growth sales rose as costs fell due to efficiencies in the scale of production. Additionally, sales increased when artists became more famous as the demand for the album copies increased. Vinyl records reached maturity when technology advanced due to the development of the newest music playing platforms such as cassette tapes in the 2000's. Competitors then became faced with the challenge to keep up with the newest and improved products which therefore made the maturity phase arrive for vinyl. In the early 2000's vinyl fell into the decline stage because CD's became more affordable and easier to store than vinyl records. As technology continuously grew, the demand for vinyl decreased resulting in fewer sales mostly achieved from DJ's. Therefore, in order to extend the product life of vinyl records the marketing campaign must be held in order to target new audiences.

This application of the Product Life Cycle includes very little information that is relevant to the marketing campaign being produced by the learner. Although the historical overview of the market is interesting, it is not relevant nor does it include examples of evaluation of data, therefore the learner does not move out of mark band one based on this aspect of their work.

In the following example, an excerpt from a PESTLE analysis, the learner has produced work which is entirely generic and lacks any evaluative comment. There is no evidence of wider research being used to underpin these comments and no meaningful link the context of Wax Perfection (the comment about machinery making records faster could be equally true of any consumers goods produced by machines.) This work was awarded a mark in mark band one for Justification.

Social

People are having kids at a later age as they are more focused on their jobs and having an education, this means that people are getting more qualifications to have a high paid job. Therefore people have more money and disposable income.

Technological

Social media is advancing and improving all the time, this can help new businesses spread their word and tell more customers what the business offers. Also more machineries are being built to make the records faster and help with saving more money.

In this example, the learner produced a piece of work that was, overall, a coherent and justified evaluation of a small range of carefully selected SWOT and PESTLE factors.

Technological – in order to listen to the music compressed in the vinyl, a vinyl player is needed. For example, these vinyl players cost anywhere from £40 up to £250. Therefore, vinyl records come with the burden of needing to buy an expensive player to even use them. Also for more enjoyment speakers would be needed in order to satisfy larger groups of people. Large speakers can cost between £100 and £300. A website for online shopping would be ideal for wax perfection to increase their customer base online as well as offline. Additionally technological developments have decreased the sales for wax perfection. For example, since 2010 music streaming services has demonstrated the area of most growth for recorded music. Therefore, as digital services increase, physical records decrease in popularity meaning wax perfection faces a decrease in sales.

R/AAQ.

This learner followed their use of the analytical models with an overall conclusion, highlighting a number of issues that they felt to be particularly relevant to Wax Perfection and explaining how/why they had influenced decisions about the marketing mix for the business – something which is done by relatively few learners. By adding an overall conclusion, this learner then moved their work from band three to band four for this assessment focus.

Assessment Focus Five: The Marketing Mix

For this assessment focus, the following evidence was required:

- How the 7P extended marketing mix could be applied to the retailing of vinyl records
- An appropriate marketing message for a marketing campaign run by small record shop
- A selection of appropriate media for the marketing campaign.

Most learners are now producing a 7 P marketing mix for this assessment focus, however, the work produced for this assessment focus is very often generic, restricting them to marks in mark band one or possibly to the bottom of mark band two.

Despite this assessment focus carrying 20 marks – 2 marks fewer than assessment focus three and four combined – many learners appear to be spending less time on this aspect of their set task. Many weaker learners produced between one and one and a half pages of work for this assessment focus, compared to around six to eight pages for assessment focuses three and four. This tends to be reflected in the marks awarded for this assessment focus.

Learners should be using the marketing mix as a framework to propose a marketing campaign for a small record shop. Instead, in many cases, learners are providing definitions without saying what they would actually propose the business does. For example, learners often gave definitions of pricing strategies without saying which pricing strategy they would use and why. Some learners discussed generic advantages and disadvantages of television advertising versus print advertising rather than focusing on the advantages to the business in the task.

Knowledge of the extended marketing mix was often weak, with a remarkably high number of learners writing about the target market for the business under the heading of “people” and the manufacturing of records under process.

The following example highlights another issue, albeit one that is becoming less common. In this case, the learner has achieved a mark in band one because, rather than writing about the marketing campaign for Wax Perfection, they have written about the marketing of HMV:

Promotion

Advertising is a brilliant way to get a new shops name out to customers; advertising in shop windows, social media. HMV have a Facebook and twitter page where there is a hashtag trending saying #Lovevinyl [6] <https://www.statista.com/statistics/368876/tesco-s-market-share-of-entertainment-retail-great-britain-uk/>

This would make customers interested in what the #Lovevinyl is and they would see HMV pop up. This would let the customer know if they ever wanted to buy a vinyl record they are selling them at HMV. HMV also did a 30 second advert which was played in 33 independent stores across the UK. The business made sure that the independent cinemas was near a HMV store and this advertising gain the business £41,000 while the advert was played for 6 weeks. [3] <https://www.marketingweek.com/2016/09/23/hmv-taps-into-the-vinyl-boom-with-new-campaign-targeted-at-students/>

The owner of Wax Perfection would like to either print adverts in specialist music magazines or distribute leaflets outside music venues after gigs/concerts.

A positive for printing adverts in specialist music magazines would be that it would get the word out to people who are increased in music.

A negative would be that not all people that are interested in music might buy this magazine and this would be a waste of money if I didn't appeal to the right target market group.

A positive of distribute leaflets outside music venues after gigs/concerts would be that it is cheaper than having an advert in a magazine.

A negative to this would be that it might not be the right audience you are looking for who comes out of the gigs/concerts.

Place

HMV have 116 stores in the UK in 2017. [4] <https://www.mirror.co.uk/money/city-news/hmv-your-local-store-closing-1719908>

Wax Perfection should have a physical store and a store online as this can help the business to gain the most customers and help the business to expand and open more shops.

It is possible that this is an example of a learner that was distracted from the task that was set by the types of resources produced by websites that had intended to try and support learners in their research.

In the following excerpt from a piece of work where the learner achieved 7 marks overall (Bottom of mark band two), the learner has produced a piece of work that makes relatively little use of marketing principles and concepts, while also being largely generic.

People: Within the shop there is staff who are experts in all different types of music. This is very helpful for customers as they will have an idea of what the customers are looking for.
Helping them to get the product they want whilst at the same time they are producing good customer service and improving the business.

Product: Vinyl records are the fastest growing segment of the music market. This is after the market had more than doubled in value between the years of 2010 and 2015. Going from £5 million to £20 million. Within 2014 this was the first time a vinyl record had passed 1 million units since 1996. These statistics show how the vinyl market is increasing rapidly and why it is a good market to be in.

Price: The price of a Vinyl is considerably more than an album or a song on a phone or even buying a CD. This is one of the main reasons that Vinyl isn't as popular is because of how expensive it is.

In comparison, the next extract is from a piece of work that achieved a mark at the bottom of mark band three. Although the work is relatively well contextualized and demonstrates an understanding of the extended marketing mix, the learner still did not cover all of the marketing mix in detail and the work could have been linked to context more thoroughly.

Process: Any business should recognise the importance of creating and maintaining a positive image because the purchasing process for a particular product or service can be the key of the promotional mix. For purchasing Wax Perfection need to ensure that they are able to take debit and credit card payments, as they are a popular type of payment and are quick and easy to use. Wax Perfection can have paper bags to put their products in, with their logo on, these will cost more than plastic bags but will show that the business cares about the environment. Wax Perfection could also offer loyalty cards and family discounts as many of their consumers have families and these will then help improve customer loyalty.

Physical environment: Businesses can reinforce their image and culture by means of the environment used by customers. The business needs to create an environment that is appropriate for their customers and that will put out the image they want. Wax Perfection needs to ensure that their store is appropriate for their consumers, they will design their interior to fit a 70s/80s theme, as this is when vinyls were the most popular and the type of lifestyle is coming back into fashion. Also, Wax Perfection can ensure that their customer services are the best that they can be, this will help with increasing customer loyalty.

People: All companies are reliant on the people who run them from front line Sales staff to the Managing Director. Having the right people is essential because they are as much a part of your business offering as the products/services you are offering.

Wax Perfection has experienced staff who are all experts in different types of music types of music. They can advise customers about which records to buy and how to get the most out of their stereo equipment and headphones. This ensures that their staff is the best that they can be and can sufficiently help out their customers.

Media selection and marketing message are often addressed poorly by learners. Media selection should build from the learners marketing mix and should show why specific channels are being used. There is no need for learners to reject channels that they will not be using. However, many pieces of work seen during this series simply covered the advantages and disadvantages of different channels without any explicit link to the promotional activities proposed in the marketing mix.

The marketing message does not need to be a slogan. It should be an explanation of what is to be communicated in the campaign. Many learners simply proposed a tagline for their adverts and although these were often very creative, they did not fully address this aspect of the assessment focus. Learners should focus on trying to clearly articulate the message(s) that will be communicated in their marketing campaign. Where learners aim to achieve marks in band three and four, this marketing message should be linked to each of the aspects of the marketing mix. For example, how will the marketing message be reflected in the way that staff interact with customers or in the physical environment of the business?

Assessment Focus Six: Budget

For this assessment focus, learners should show an understanding of the costs associated with the marketing campaign that they proposed in assessment focus five. It is essential that this aspect of the work be contextualized in order to move into mark bands three and four.

Many learners are either omitting the work for this assessment focus or are simply producing a generic list of costs such as that which might be found on a rate card. In some cases, learners are simply indicating what percentage of the marketing budget will be spent on specific types of promotion – e.g. 20% on print, 30% on online advertising etc.

Where learners are aiming to achieve a mark in band three or four, they should consider not just the cost of placing promotional material in the media, but also the cost of producing promotional material.

For example, one excellent piece of work submitted during this series noted that the business wanted to consider handing out leaflets after gigs. The learner produced a budget that showed

- The time that staff would spend designing a flyer on a PC (e.g. 2 hours wages @£8 per hour, using free software (google slides))
- The time that staff would spend handing out the records (e.g. 2 staff for 2 hours at £8 per hour)
- The cost of printing the leaflets (e.g. 6p per sheet x 5000 leaflets from a local printing business)

They similarly broke down the cost of adding content to social media and of producing email shots to customers on a mailing list.

This was a detailed, sophisticated and realistic budget that earned full marks for this assessment focus.

On the other hand, this learner achieved 2 marks for producing a budget that is not clear about how money is being spent on each promotional activity:

Social 430*8

Radio 500*3

Event 1000

Flyer 2000

Total £7940, leaving \$60 spare.



Assessment Focus Seven: Timescale

For this assessment focus, learners are required to produce a timescale that is realistic in the context of their plan. In other words, the activities laid out in the proposed marketing mix should be placed into a timescale that provides a clear start and end point for the marketing campaign.

A large number of learners are still omitting work for this assessment focus.

Weaker candidates are still producing a table with shaded boxes that they are referring to as a Gantt Chart. These tables tend to be relatively simplistic, simply showing which activities will take place in a given week.

The best pieces of work include a detailed list of the start dates, end dates and durations of different activities. This is often embedded within the marketing mix.

In many cases, learners lose marks because their timescale is not realistic in the context of their plan. For example, one learner suggested that they would spend £100 on leafleting, but suggested that this activity would take place through the whole length of their six month campaign.

In the following example, the learner was given a mark in band two for a time scale that is generally realistic in the context of their plan.

Activity	Start	End	Month													
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
SWOT PESTLE	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	■	■												
Customer analysis- target market	March 2018	April 2018			■	■	■									
Competitor analysis	April 2018	May 2018				■	■	■								
Market segmentation	May 2018	June 2018					■	■	■							
Product	July 2018	Jul 2018								■						
Promotion	July 2018	July 2018								■						
Execute	November 2018	December 2018													■	■

It is worth noting that this timescale takes a slightly different approach to many pieces of work, showing how much time the business should spend working on underpinning activities such as SWOT analysis.

In this case, the reason that the plan was not considered realistic was simply because of one factor – a lack of relationship between the timescale and the proposed marketing mix. For example, in the timescale, the learner suggests promotional activity will be given only one month. However, in their marketing mix they suggested a wide range of activities that would collectively be likely to last for much more than a month.

Assessment Focus Eight: Presentation

For this assessment focus, learners needed to produce a piece of work that has:

- A professional format
- No major errors in communication
- Use of appropriate marketing terminology

Most learners continued to use standard headings such as Marketing Mix, Budget and Timescale, providing a clear structure to their work. However, many learners produced work that included obtrusive errors in spelling and grammar which meant that work could not easily be understood. This led to work being placed in mark band two or three. Learners are reminded that they should carefully proofread their work for activity two to ensure that it is free from such errors.

Another common error is the lack of use of marketing terminology. Learners often simply use words like advert to describe any promotional activity and do not make reference to important concepts such as target markets when writing their campaign proposal.

Summary

Based on the performance of learners during this series, centres should consider the following when preparing for future series:

- Give learners an opportunity to practice completing part B within the permitted three hour timescale, ensuring that they understand how to divide their time effectively between activity one and two.
- Consider whether learners will be fully prepared for the assessment in the January or Summer window of their first year. It is especially important to keep in mind that this is a synoptic unit and that it is expected that learners will use content from all units within the qualification.
- Support learners develop their research skills so that they are less reliant on published summaries of data and better able to select material that is relevant to the context of the Part B activity.
- Ensure that learners understand how to write analytically and that they are aware of the need to use the data included in assessment focus three and four as the basis for analysis and evaluation, in the context of the business identified in Part B.
- Make time for and use formative assessment strategies to ensure that learners fully understand and can apply key concepts such as the extended marketing mix and the validity and reliability of research.
- Help learners to practice the production of a contextualised marketing mix, showing them how to combine theory and data in order to produce a campaign proposal that relates closely to a specific context.
- Ensure that learners are aware of the need for activity one to provide the background to the campaign proposed in activity two and that they understand that each element of activity two should clearly relate to the marketing campaign proposed in Part B.

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