

# BUSINESS STRATEGY IN FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

## **Professional 2 examination 7 June 2000**

From 10.00 am to 1.00 pm  
plus ten minutes reading time from 9.50 am to 10.00 am.

### *Instructions to candidates*

*Answer **five** questions in total. **Question 1** from Section A, **two** questions from Section B and **both** questions from Section C. The marks available for each question are shown in italics in the right-hand margin.*

*All workings should be shown. Where calculations are required using formulae, calculators may be used but steps in the workings must be shown. Calculations with no evidence of this (for example, using the scientific functions of calculators) will receive no credit. Programmable calculators are not permitted in the examinations room.*

*Formula sheets, statistical tables, graph paper and cash analysis paper are available from the invigilator, where applicable.*

**SECTION A (Compulsory)****1**

Quality College was formed just over two years ago by the merger of three small Further Education colleges. Within months of its formation it took over more than 2,000 students from a neighbouring college which was closing, bringing its total number of students to over 8,000. The Board of Governors, together with its senior managers, is having a weekend away to discuss important policy and strategic issues.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors has mentioned to the College's Principal and Chief Executive that one of the issues which Governors most frequently raise is environmental change, both in terms of its pervasiveness and pace. "We just can't keep up" is a common complaint. In particular, the following have been mentioned:

- the changes in Government funding;
- the possibility of further mergers;
- the Private Finance Initiative (PFI); and
- other Government policies including the implications of the Dearing Report and the Welfare to Work initiative.

Concern has also been raised that the present approach to strategic planning adopted by the Board of Governors (essentially strategic analysis, strategic choice and strategic implementation) is being partially negated by the frequency and intensity of structural change. To facilitate deliberations on this general topic, you have been asked by the Director of Finance to draft a paper which reviews the four policy initiatives mentioned above and illustrates some alternative approaches to strategy making.

- **Requirement for question 1**

Draft a paper which:

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| (a) Describes the four policy initiatives and illustrates their impact on the strategy of Further Education colleges;      | 12 |
| (b) Defines the concepts of deliberate and emergent strategies, and outlines three possible approaches to strategy making. | 6  |

(18)

**SECTION B (Answer two questions)****2**

- (a) Define organisational culture and indicate the importance of its impact on strategy. 2
- (b) Identify and explain the types of culture suggested by Handy, and outline the organisational structure that is appropriate for each. 4
- (c) Explain the ingredients of the cultural web. 4
- (d) Relate cultural theory to an education sector organisation of your choice, applying the cultural web and clearly justifying which of Handy's types is dominant. 8
- (18)

**3**

It has been said that implementation is the key stage in strategy as without it, the resources employed in analysis, diagnosis and evaluation would be wasted, and the strategic cycle would be incomplete. An important aspect of implementation is communication.

- **Requirement for question 3**

- (a) Outline the importance of good communication, and describe the features which ensure that it is effective. 6
- (b) Describe the role of marketing in strategy implementation and explain the principal components of the marketing mix. 6
- (c) Analyse how an education sector organisation of your choice communicates strategic decisions, explaining the methods used, and evaluating whether the communication was effective. 6
- (18)

# 4

Strategic option selection can be carried out through the evaluation of each option for its consistency, suitability, feasibility and acceptability.

- **Requirement for question 4**

(a) Outline three methods used in appraising the financial viability of an option, stating briefly the advantages and disadvantages of each method. 6

(b) Discuss two techniques which can be used to incorporate the non-financial elements of an option when making strategic selection, and outline methods of dealing with risks arising from option selection. 12

*(18)*

**SECTION C (Answer both questions)****5**

The Design and Printing Service (DPS) provides a wide range of design and reprographic services to the departments of Redbridge University and to private sector businesses outside the University. The DPS was formed as a company as part of a management buyout of the Reprographics Division of the University when a programme of outsourcing was begun three years ago. As part of the management buyout the DPS was given a guaranteed contract of all work from the University for a five year period. Over the last three years the DPS has established a large customer base and now has an annual turnover of £8 million.

The DPS is structured into four main functions: marketing and sales; design and production; customer liaison; and internal support services. At the start of each year the senior management team agree annual budgets, using the principles of incremental budgeting for each of the functions as well as performance targets/indicators for the coming year. This process then provides the basis for the annual business plan which is produced by the Head of Internal Support Services. The senior management team comprises the Chief Executive and the heads of the four functions. Performance against budgets is reviewed quarterly by the senior management team. The DPS has a five year strategic plan and this will be reviewed again as part of the planning process for year six of operation. The strategic plan contains the following mission statement for the DPS.

*“To deliver best in class services to our customers. We will employ the best people and use leading edge technology to provide services that are of unbeatable quality and value for money.”*

Details of the performance indicators and outturns for the first three years of operation are given below.

Performance Indicator	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	Target	Outturn	Target	Outturn	Target	Outturn
Return on Capital	6%	9%	6%	8%	6%	6%
Turnover	£5m	£5.8m	£6m	£7m	£7.5m	£8m
Profit as % of turnover	3%	5%	5%	9%	6%	4%
Liquidity:						
current ratio	2:1	1.5:1	2:1	1.8:1	2:1	1.7:1
quick ratio	1:1	0.7:1	1:1	0.5:1	1:1	0.9:1
Average debtor collection period - days	30	45	30	40	30	38
Cost saving	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
% new contracts	10%	11%	10%	15%	10%	20%
% orders delivered on time	99%	80%	95%	78%	95%	75%
Staff turnover	5%	10%	5%	15%	5%	20%
Customer complaints	0	25	15	40	20	45

The Chief Executive has just returned from a seminar on "Introducing the Balanced Scorecard", and has asked that the application of this approach to performance management be considered at the next meeting of the senior management team. In preparation for this meeting he has asked the Head of Internal Support Services to compare current performance management practice against the Balanced Scorecard model.

- **Requirement for question 5**

The Head of Internal Support Services has asked you, as the Finance Officer, to prepare a report for the next meeting of the senior management team which compares current arrangements for performance management with the Balanced Scorecard model. In particular the report should:

- (a) Provide a brief introduction to the Balanced Scorecard; 2
- (b) Critically evaluate the current system of performance management, identify any gaps or shortfalls in the current range of performance indicators, and list any concerns that the trend in performance indicator results raise; and 13
- (c) Identify two practical examples of objectives, associated measures and indicative targets for each of the Balanced Scorecard's four perspectives. Examples must be relevant to the case study and linked to the delivery of the DPS's mission statement. 8

(23)

# 6

Southlands University is a relatively small university set in a rural county in Southern England. Tourism and farming are the main industries of the area. Tourism is very seasonal, employing a large, but mostly casual, workforce for four months each year. Farming is undergoing deep recession, particularly the beef and dairy industry which dominates farming in the area.

Southlands is an area of outstanding natural beauty, has a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and has extensive woodlands, wetlands and rare flora and fauna. It is also, however, a deprived area economically with per capita GDP at 85% of the national average. It has high levels of unemployment which is currently three times the national average. It also has large numbers of second ownership homes making housing scarce, though not expensive, for local people. It suffers poor local amenities in terms of sport and leisure facilities, health and education.

Recently, economically significant deposits of limestone were discovered in land owned by the University. The deposits are not large and will only be significant for 10-12 years at most. The University is in need of additional funds and has agreed in principle to lease the area to the International Global Mining Company which has applied for permission to develop an open-cast quarry and processing plant. The area is a location of outstanding natural beauty which, although not protected as an SSSI, is considered to be of importance due to its woodlands and nesting sites for migrating birds.

The company has promised that the site will create 120 jobs, that it will landscape the area to protect the local scenery and that it will invest in leisure facilities and a health centre in the local town.

Following a discussion in the University Senate, the Vice-Chancellor has been concerned about the stakeholder conflict, and particularly the issue of the economic well-being of the district and the University, the negative environmental impact of the quarry, and the image of the University with the local community and student body. He has asked you to draft a paper to outline the economic and ethical dimensions of the decision.

- **Requirement for question 6**

Using the information provided in the case prepare a paper for the Senate which:

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| (a) Outlines the importance of ethical considerations in the strategic decision making process;  | 4  |
| (b) Sets out the economic and ethical factors which need to be considered in order to evaluate the decision whether to support the development of the quarry; and      | 9  |
| (c) Identifies the different stakeholders, their likely values and the steps involved in integrating these values into the strategic management process of the Senate. | 10 |

(23)