

CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)

Examiners' report

BUSINESS

05834–05837, 05878

Unit 15 January 2021 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Unit 15 series overview

The scenario for this paper (a farm wishing to become a wedding venue) has proved extremely accessible. Most candidates were able to give contextually accurate and comprehensive responses to most questions. There has been a marked reduction in the amount of confusion regarding drivers of change and barriers to change.

Examiners have seen some excellent, and very carefully considered, responses to the high tariff questions on the paper. The best scripts answered in context throughout. There was no evidence of candidates experiencing time pressure on this paper.

<i>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:</i>	<i>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> used change management theory to support how the change should be managed (including Lewin's change management theory) answered the questions contextually made justified judgements according to required criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confused Lewin's change management theory with Kotter's 8-step process for leading change made vague statements about impacts, e.g. 'impacts profit', 'has a bearing on reputation', 'affects the number of bookings', etc, without stating the direction of the impact.

As always, the paper contained three high tariff extended response questions each carrying 16 marks. These questions were level of response marked: Level 1 knowledge (1 – 4 marks), Level 2 understanding (5 – 8 marks), Level 3 analysis (9 – 12) marks, Level 4 evaluation (13 -16 marks). Candidates needed to demonstrate the skills of analysis (Level 3) and evaluation (Level 4) to gain the highest marks. Evidence suggests that those candidates who took an 'item by item' approach (i.e. analysing each item in turn) before making an overall judgement, scored most highly.

An analytical response must have the correct focus

Analysis requires candidates to develop their responses to include a chain of argument about the impacts of factors on the business or its stakeholders. The focus of the impacts is clearly stated in the wording of each question. To be awarded at Level 3 the focus for these impacts needs to be correct.

On this paper Questions 1c and 2a focused on impacts on May's Farm. However, Question 1d required impacts on particular stakeholders of the business i.e. customers and suppliers. A significant proportion of candidates wasted valuable examination time on Question 1d writing about the impacts on May's Farm, when this was not required by the question.

An evaluative response must justify the decision made

Evaluation requires a decision that answers the question. For example, which barrier to change is likely to have the greatest impact on May's Farm if not managed successfully (Question 1c), a judgement of the likely impacts of the change on customers and suppliers (Question 1d), and a prioritisation of the issues which the partners still need to address (Question 2b). However, this decision alone does not give access to Level 4 marks. Candidates also need to give a justification for the decision made i.e. they need to provide reasoning to support their decisions.

To gain the highest marks in Level 4, candidates should be encouraged to provide contextualised reasoning to support their decisions. For example, in Question 1d a response might have suggested that low booking cancellation rate might be the most important issue to address because increasing the number of bookings would allow additional revenue to be accumulated which could be used to provide customer service training for the flustered catering staff, employ a professional to help with the website or recruit more cleaning staff for the toilets.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Using the 'unfreeze' stage of Lewin's change management theory, explain **two** steps the partners should include in the action plan for change at *May's Farm*.

[4]

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This question tested candidates' understanding of change management theory, in this case the unfreeze stage of Lewin's model, and how it could be used in practice. By far the most common correct responses to this question were 'challenge the status quo' and 'communicate with stakeholders why change is needed'.

Of those who appeared to know about Lewin's theory, the most common error was to suggest steps that would fit in the 'change' stage of the model. It should be noted that the unfreeze stage of Lewin's theory is pre-change i.e. when the need for change is being established, but the change itself has not yet been identified.

Despite there only being three change management theories on the Specification it was evident, from the number of blank responses, that some candidates were totally unfamiliar with Lewin's change management mode. In addition, a significant proportion of candidates appeared to confuse Lewin's change management theory with Kotter's 8-step process for leading change.

	AfL	Centres are advised to make sure that they cover all areas of the Specification. This is particularly important for the change management theories because, without specific knowledge, it would be virtually impossible to gain any marks on questions which target this area of the Specification.
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Question 1 (c)

(c) Analyse likely barriers to change at *May's Farm*.

Which of these barriers to change is likely to have the greatest impact on *May's Farm* if not managed successfully? Give reasons for your choice.

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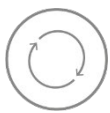
This is the first of three 16-mark questions on the paper. All the 16-mark question are level of response marked over four levels i.e. Level 1 knowledge, Level 2 understanding, Level 3 analysis, Level 4 evaluation. An example of the type of response the examiner was looking for f questions is shown as an 'exemplar response' in the published mark scheme for each of the 16-mark questions.

This question was testing candidates' understanding of barriers to change on May's Farm. Examiners were not looking for a theoretical list of potential barriers, rather a discussion of the barriers that were already emerging at May's Farm given the information presented in Resource 1. For example, lack of finance was a barrier; this is a Level 1 response. To move the response to Level 2 some further information to show understanding would be required. In this example about lack of finance, explaining that the business would need to borrow £850,000 would suffice for Level 2. To move to Level 3 an impact of this barrier on May's Farm's change management process needs to be suggested. A suggestion that borrowing money would incur interest charges which would increase the overall cost of the project would move the response to Level 3, and thus gain a minimum mark of nine.

It should be noted that barriers to change are always negative, therefore the arguments throughout Levels 1 to 3 should also be negative. However, comments such as 'project fails', 'business failure', 'change unsuccessful' were not awarded as they were deemed too vague.

An ideal response would identify, explain and analyse at least one other barrier before attempting to reach an overall conclusion as to relative magnitude.

To gain Level 4 the candidate needs to move their response on to weigh up which barrier is likely to have the greatest impact on May's Farm if not managed successfully. Simply picking one of the barriers is insufficient for a Level 4 award, the candidate must provide an argument, i.e. a rationale, in support of their decision. A contextual rationale will be rewarded highly. It is important to understand that there is no right or wrong response here, any barrier can be selected, so long as a valid justification for it having the greatest impact is given.

	<p>AfL</p>	<p>Evidence suggests that the best Level 4 responses work through three stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly identifying one specific barrier deemed to be most significant • explaining why the barrier has the greatest impact (with context) • explaining why the other barriers have a lesser impact (with context). <p>Centres are advised to give candidates plenty of practice at using this framework. One way this could be achieved is to give candidates a Level 3 response containing the analysis of two barriers of change and ask them to write a concluding paragraph which moves the response from a Level 3 mark of 10 to a top Level 4 mark of 16.</p>
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Question 1 (d)

- (d) Evaluate likely impacts of the proposed change on each of the following stakeholders of *May's Farm*:
- customers;
 - suppliers.

[16]

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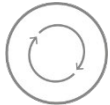
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This question required candidates to consider how customers and suppliers would be affected by the opening of May's Hall, a wedding and corporate events venue. The best responses were clearly laid out, considering each stakeholder in turn before attempting to reach an overall decision as to impact.

For Level 3 the analysis needed to be the consequent impacts on customers or suppliers. Impacts on May's Farm could not be awarded, as these were not required by the question. Candidates who considered that there were different types of customers (e.g. glamping customers, wedding customers, loyal customers, local customers, potential new customers) and different types of suppliers (e.g. current suppliers, new suppliers, suppliers of camping supplies, suppliers of building materials, suppliers of events furniture, suppliers of catering supplies) tended to score most highly.

Having analysed the impacts of the change on customers/suppliers, candidates were expected to make an overall judgement as to impact to gain Level 4. Again, there was no right or wrong response here. It is possible to argue that either stakeholder was most affected or that one was positive and one was negative or one was short term but the other long term, etc, so long as suitable reasoning is provided. As with all 16-mark questions on this paper, an indication of the type of response the examiner was looking for is given in the exemplar response in the published mark scheme

Many responses gave a long list of potential impacts on customers/suppliers but made no attempt whatsoever at reaching an overall conclusion.

	<p>AfL</p>	<p>Centres are advised to reinforce to candidates that all 'evaluate' questions, indeed all 16-mark questions on this paper, require a judgement to be made. The easiest way to achieve this is at the end of response, having re-read the requirements of the question and the arguments the candidate themselves has put forward. This is because the judgement put forward should both answer the question set and tie in with the arguments previously mentioned by the candidate.</p>
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Question 2 (a)

2 Refer to **Resource 2**.

- (a) Using the information in **Resource 2**, analyse the issues which the partners at *May's Farm* need to address.

Prioritise these issues in order of importance. Give reasons for your choice.

[16]

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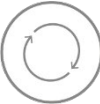

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This question required candidates to consider the information given in Resource 2 and prioritise the most important issues that the partners need to address. Some very good responses were seen to this question and, once again, these tended to be clearly presented issue by issue. For example, the candidate would identify an issue, e.g. dirty toilets (Level 1) which could lead to customers being put off from coming to the venue (Level 2), leading to a loss of revenue (Level 3). The response would then move on to another issue and do the same i.e. suggest why the issue is problematic. Once, say three issues had been analysed, the candidate would then rank the issues in order of importance and justify this ranking (Level 4). Those candidates who gave valid reasons why an issue was ranked highest, and why other issues were given a lesser rank, were awarded most highly in Level 4.

Most candidates managed to score at least half marks. Candidates need to be encouraged to give specific impacts for Level 3, e.g. lower profit, bad reputation, loss of customers, higher labour turnover, increased absenteeism, etc. Responses such as 'less business', 'business in difficulty', 'business problems' were deemed too vague to award.

Candidates who scored less highly on this question tended to begin well before wandering into how to fix the issues or the benefits of fixing these issues. Such candidates clearly lost focus on the question part-way through their response.

	<p>AfL</p>	<p>All candidates can benefit from rechecking the focus of a question while writing their response. Best practice suggests that candidates should be encouraged not only to check the question wording before beginning their response but also throughout their response as they move from paragraph to paragraph. It is especially important to refocus on the demands of the question before attempting to draw overall conclusions.</p> <p>Centres are advised to encourage candidates to re-read each question several times while writing an answer to an extended response question, primarily to make sure that they have not lost the focus of the question.</p>
	<p>Misconception</p>	<p>A common misconception is that a 'prioritise' question does not need any justification, solely a ranking. A 'prioritise' question does need the issues to be ranked, but these also need supporting with justified reasons for the ranking. Not attempting to give reasons for the ranking is poor examination technique. Centres are advised to encourage candidates to always include a justification for the decisions they make.</p>

Question 2 (b)

(b) Informal feedback from staff who work at May's Hall shows low levels of job satisfaction.

Identify **four** ways staff satisfaction at May's Hall could be improved.

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[4]

This question tested candidate understanding of how, following a period of change, staff satisfaction could be improved. All that candidates were required to do was name four different ways. Most candidates were able to suggest at least three ways and scored highly on this question.

The most common correct responses were monetary methods of motivation, e.g. 'increased pay' and 'offer bonuses'. Other popular responses were 'staff training', 'opportunities for promotion', 'fringe benefits' and 'empowerment'.

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