

CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)

Examiners' report

BUSINESS

05834–05837, 05878

Unit 15 Summer 2022 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.

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Unit 15 series overview

During this series, there have been a range of responses, with most candidates demonstrating a good understanding of key unit content, well developed exam technique and an ability to apply the data in resource A and B to contextualise their responses. Candidates tended to find the scenario of a service sector business reasonably accessible and gave good to both shorter questions and extended writing items.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understood relevant theory and applied that understanding to the context of a specific business • selectively used case study data to support and develop responses • went into an appropriate level of detail in their responses to each question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not use contextual information effectively to inform their responses • did not correctly categorise case study data according to relevant theory • did not develop responses to extended writing questions with a focus on the impact of issues on a specific business.

This paper includes three high tariff questions, each offering candidates the opportunity to earn up to 16 marks. In order to maximise attainment on these items, candidates need to demonstrate the skills of analysis and evaluation. Analysis requires candidates to show the impact of the issue that the question focuses on. This is often the impact on the business but could also be the impact on other stakeholder groups. The majority of candidates approached these questions in a meticulous fashion, producing well-structured responses which examine key issues from the resource material provided, point by point.

Structure is key to achieving higher marks on extended writing items

Where candidates wish to achieve the top mark band for these questions, they should write an overall conclusion at the end of their response. These concluding paragraphs should not include any new material, but rather should weigh evidence from arguments already put forward. This will vary from question to question. In some cases, this may require candidates to pick the most significant issue, it may require identification of the largest benefit or the worst failing of a change. It is important that candidates read the questions carefully to determine what their conclusion should focus on.

Question 1 (a) (i)

1 Refer to **Resource 1**.

(a) Drivers of change come from many sources including changes in the economy and changes in the market.

(i) Explain **one** change in the economy that has driven change at *Maxi Exercise*.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

Questions 1 a, b, c and d in this paper related to resource 1. Each question should have been answered with reference to that resource. Candidates should not use material from resource 2 in their responses to this question. This will remain to be the case in future papers.

This question tested candidates' knowledge of the role of economic factors as a driver of change. Candidates were required to read the information in resource 1 and correctly explain the economic factors noted in that data. In this case, the only possible responses were an increase in unemployment or recession. Candidates needed to pick one of these drivers and explain it.

Many candidates did not explain the driver. In this case, that would require them to explain how these economic changes might affect a business selling upmarket exercise equipment.

A small but notable minority of candidates did not use the data provided, but rather made reference to contemporaneous economic changes – most notably the cost of living crisis. While some of these responses reflected a good understanding of the underlying concept, this was not a valid response to the question which asked candidates to focus specifically on the data provided about Maxi Exercise.

Assessment for learning



A key area of focus should be on identifying directionality in the data provided. Some candidates lost marks because their response simply focused on “unemployment” – the driver of change in this case was the fact that unemployment had risen. Candidates should be encouraged to practice not only finding the drivers of change in a piece of data, but also the directionality of that driver.

Question 1 (a) (ii)

(ii) Explain **one** change in the market that has driven change at *Maxi Exercise*.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

This question tested candidates' knowledge of the market changes that might drive change. Most candidates were able to find relevant data in resource 1, noting that either that consumers had developed a preference for exercising at gyms or that there was an increase in the number of competitors selling lower priced equipment.

While many candidates were able to gain one mark for giving a relevant change in the market, many candidates were not able to gain a second mark as they did not show why this was a driver of change.

Misconception



Some candidates lost marks on Question 1a because they confused changes in the market with changes in the economy. Candidates should be aware that changes in the market relate mainly to the tastes, preferences and behaviour of customers or the activity of competitors.

On the other hand, economic factors relate to macroeconomic indicators such as unemployment, inflation or economic growth. In all cases, candidates should be aware of directionality –, e.g., how has the factor changed and why does this lead to change.

Question 1 (b)

(b) The partners are aware that changes in revenue and changes in costs affect profit.

Evaluate likely impacts of the proposed change on *Maxi Exercise's* profit. In your answer you should consider the following:

- short-term impacts on profit
- long-term impacts on profit.

[16]

This was the first of two 16 mark questions on this paper. Many candidates did relatively well on this question by selecting a range of factors from resource a that might have an impact on profits in either the short or long term.

Many candidates were able to select information from resource a that related to changes in the costs or revenues of the business, earning a Level 1 mark, and a large number of candidates were then able to show how these factors might influence profits, although many candidates lost marks by not being able to differentiate between those factors which might have a short term impact – such as the one off cost of delivering training or those which might have a long term impact – such as the ongoing need to continue to rent buildings. Many candidates achieved Level 3 mark because they were able to show how increases in costs or revenues might lead to changes in the level of profit. Where candidates gave vague responses such as “...this will affect profits...” they did not gain marks, but where they showed how, for example, an increase in costs would reduce profits, they were able to gain marks.

Level 4 marks were given to candidates who wrote a concluding paragraph where they made a justified judgement about the impact of different changes in either the short or long term, but many candidates who did achieve Level 4 did not maximise their marks because they considered either short or long term profits in isolation and they did not contrast the two timescales.

Misconception



In order to maximise Level 4 marks, candidates need to make sure that their conclusion is contextualised. This means that the response should refer to the industry in which the business operates or the specific profits that it sells. Repeating words from the question or using the name of the business is not sufficient to qualify as a contextualised response. References to, for example, exercise classes, or fitness instructors earns candidates 1 or 2 extra marks in their conclusion paragraph. A similar approach works for the conclusion on most 16 mark questions on this paper.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Analyse barriers to change at *Maxi Exercise*.

If not managed successfully, which of these barriers is likely to have the greatest impact on *Maxi Exercise*? Give reasons for your choice.

[16]

This was the second 16 mark question on this paper with a large number of candidates losing marks, or in some cases, not earning any marks, because they were not able to correctly select barriers to change from resource a.

In some cases, candidates used the drivers of change as potential barriers to change, citing economic factors. This was not the case, as the resource material did not indicate that the business was likely to struggle to successfully make the change because of these issues. In other cases, candidates simply misinterpreted the evidence in resource a, ascribing it to the wrong barrier to change – for example, evidence of staff inertia was used to try and justify the idea that the business might have poor leadership. The fact that the business was losing sales as a result of increased competition and changes in consumer behaviour was used to suggest that the business might not have the funds needed for the change.

Where candidates were able to select evidence of appropriate barriers to change, they were often able to earn Level 3 marks by showing a clear business impact of the barrier that they had focused on. Some candidates lost marks because, instead of showing the business impact of the barriers to change that they found, they wrote an action plan suggesting how the barrier could be overcome. Unfortunately, the question did not ask for this response and subsequently, candidates were not able to earn marks, despite some making good suggestions as to how barriers could be overcome.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be confident identifying barriers to change from the resource material in past papers or relevant case studies. They could be provided feedback on the accuracy of their responses, addressing any confusion or misconceptions to help them more accurately differentiate between barriers to change and drivers of change.

Question 1 (d)

(d) The partners have decided to appoint Alex as project champion.

Identify **two** benefits to *Maxi Exercise* of appointing a project champion.

1

.....

2

.....

[2]

A minority of candidates earned marks on this question. Most candidates were unable to identify the benefits of a project champion. In some cases, candidates described the role of a project champion. In other cases, they simply offered generic comments such as the fact that they champion will make the change run smoother.

Misconception



A common mistake made by candidates on this question was to provide benefits of or a description of a project manager rather than a project champion. It is important that candidates are aware of the role of a project champion and of the issues involved in appointing one. They should be able to accurately find evidence in a resource to, for example, show the need for or impact of this role.

Question 2 (a)

2 Refer to **Resource 2**.

(a) Using **Resource 2**, analyse aspects of the change that have gone well.

Which of these aspects is the most important for *Maxi Exercise*? Justify your view.

[16]

Question 2a and 2b related to resource 2. Candidates should have only used references to this resource in answering these questions. The majority of candidates were aware of this, although a small minority did make reference to resource 1 data in their responses.

This question was the third 16 mark question on this paper. Most candidates performed relatively well on this question. Most were able to select aspects of the change that had gone well, using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data in their responses.

Where candidates selected aspects of the change that had gone well, they were given a Level 1 mark. Where they took this point and demonstrated its impact on the business, they were given a Level 3 mark. A common line of argument used to develop these points was the idea that the positive aspects of the change would either lead to an improved reputation or an increase in future revenues – for example as a result of repeat custom or because good service would generate positive word of mouth.

A minority of candidates misinterpreted the question and either wrote about both positive and negative aspects of the change or they proposed an action plan based on the issues they identified.

While a number of candidates were able to make a justified judgement, showing why one issue was more important than others, achieving a Level 4 mark, many of these responses were not contextualised. References to fitness instructors or fitness classes would have gained candidates an extra mark. Relatively few candidates did not gain all four Level 4 marks because, while they might have written an evaluation giving the most important positive factor, they did not compare and contrast this with another factor that they considered less important, thus losing them either two or three extra marks.

Misconception



When questions ask candidates to consider the outcome of a change, it might not always ask for consideration of both positive and negative factors. In some cases, questions may take a different approach such as this one where candidates have to consider one side of the issue and then make a judgement about the most significant or best or worst aspect of the change.

Candidates should make sure that they address the specific issue that the question focuses on.

Question 2 (b)

- (b) The partners of *Maxi Exercise* are planning to launch weekend fitness classes within the next three months.

Identify the **three** stages of Lewin's change management theory. In each case, provide an example of an appropriate action that *Maxi Exercise* could take to support this additional change.

Stage 1

Action

.....

.....

Stage 2

Action

.....

.....

Stage 3

Action

.....

.....

[6]

Many candidates were able to gain three marks for this question by naming the three stages of Lewin's model. A small but significant minority lost one mark because they wrote "freeze" rather than "refreeze" as the third stage in the model. This was too vague to warrant the awarding of a mark.

While most candidates were able to correctly name two or three stages of the model, relatively few candidates were able to earn more than three marks because they did not demonstrate understanding of the types of activity that might be carried out at each stage. For example, holding meetings with stakeholders such as staff at the unfreeze stage in order to show why the change is needed. Where candidates did demonstrate this understanding, they were not always able to earn marks because their responses were not contextualised. For example, making reference to fitness instructors. Where candidates made reference to weekend fitness classes, this was not given a mark as it involved repeating words from the question.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be given the opportunity to practice applying their understanding of models such as Lewin's change model to different scenarios. Rehearsing this skill and receiving feedback on both the accuracy of their application and the quality of their contextualisation of their responses should be a useful rehearsal for this type of question.

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