

CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)

Examiners' report

BUSINESS

05834–05837, 05878

Unit 15 January 2023 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

In this series, examiners saw a range of responses to each question with candidates accessing the full range of marks on each item. Many candidates used good exam technique, developing responses thoroughly and using contextual data well to support their answers. The context of a manufacturing firm in a B2B market was accessible to most candidates, providing a grounding for their responses to both short response 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"> distinguished between customers and consumers, showing a good understanding of the issues specific to the given context developed responses by using relevant theory demonstrated selectivity when taking material from Resource 1 and Resource 2 to support their responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> used the wrong resource material to support their responses applied theory to questions inaccurately gave generic responses which were not based on the given context.

Three of the questions on this paper were 16-mark extended writing items which required candidates to analyse data and make judgements. In many cases, candidates produced well-written responses that used relevant evidence but were not able to achieve marks because they chose the wrong focus for their response. For example, in Question 1 (b), many candidates wrote about the impact of the change on Beetz Sweetz, instead of focussing on the stated stakeholders.

Recognising the demands of a question is essential to success

On Question 1 (b), many candidates focused their analysis on the Beetz Sweetz business. This meant that they were not able to achieve full marks for this question because the response should have focused on the impact on key stakeholders – customers and employees. Where candidates did not show how the proposed change would impact these groups, they were able to gain few, if any marks.

It is essential to read questions carefully to make sure that responses have the correct focus.

Question 1 (a)

1 Refer to **Resource 1**.

(a) Explain **two** changes in the **market** that have driven change at Beetz Sweetz plc.

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[4]

Questions 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d) in this paper relate to Resource 1. Candidates should have used that material to support their responses. Where some candidates used material from Resource 2 to support their responses, they were not able to gain marks as this content was not relevant to these questions.

This question tested candidates' knowledge of the market factors that drove a change at Beetz Sweetz. In this case, Resource 1 highlighted two factors:

- changes in consumer behaviour
- changes in competitor behaviour

Any other drivers of change, including other market-based drivers, were not relevant to this question. Candidates were able to gain 1 mark for the driver and a second for contextual information – noting that the driver was related to increased demand for vegetarian products in the case of consumers, or production of vegetarian products. Candidates needed to include some indication of directionality to gain marks for this question. It was not enough to say that customers want vegetarian products, candidates had to note that this demand had increased. Similarly, it was not enough to note that competitors were making vegetarian sweets, candidates had to show that this had increased.

Assessment for learning



A key issue with this paper was the ability of candidates to differentiate between customers and consumers. In many responses candidates used the terms interchangeably. But a number seemed to confuse the end user of the sweets with the customers buying the sweets from Beetz Sweetz, e.g. supermarkets. This was a particular problem with Questions 1 (a) and (b).

Question 1 (b)

- (b) The directors have decided that all of Beetz Sweetz plc's packet sweets should be modified so that they are suitable for vegetarians. This decision has implications for stakeholders including supermarkets, which are one of Beetz Sweetz plc's major customers.

Evaluate which of the following stakeholder groups will be affected the most by this decision:

- customers
- employees.

[16]

This was the first 16-mark question on the paper. Most candidates performed relatively well on this question, making valid points and analysing carefully selected data.

Most candidates identified key issues for customers; the increase in the price of sweets, and employees; the stress caused by new training and new working practices.

Many responses were not able to access higher mark bands because they focused on the impact of the decision on Beetz Sweetz. For example, instead of noting that the higher price of vegetarian sweets might make it harder for supermarkets to make a profit, they explained that this might affect the profits of Beetz Sweetz. Candidates also made a similar mistake with issues relating to employees. For example, instead of discussing the difficulties faced by employees in completing training, they analysed the expense that this would create for Beetz Sweetz and the subsequent impact on profits.

Where candidates did not achieve Level 3 marks for analysing impacts of the decision on the correct stakeholders, this also meant that, even when they had given a conclusion, they were not able to access Level 4 marks either.

Many responses gave an appropriate conclusion about which stakeholder group would be affected the most, but many did not contextualise their conclusions, causing them to lose marks. References to the name of the business are not sufficient to create a contextualised response, but candidates could have gained a context mark by making reference to the specific products produced by the business.

Misconception



Many candidates who did achieve Level 4 marks on this question were not able to reach the top of that mark band because, while they made a valid, justified judgement about which stakeholder group would be affected the most, they did not make a justified judgement about why the impact on the other stakeholder group would be less. Questions on this paper will normally require a conclusion that both selects and rejects options.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Outline **one** barrier to change at Beetz Sweetz plc.

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This question was generally well answered by candidates with most able to use data effectively. In order to gain both marks, candidates had to give the type of barrier to change and then use evidence from the case study to develop that point. A generic response would only gain 1 mark. A contextualised response would gain 2 marks.

For example, giving failure of a previous change initiative would only gain 1 mark, but noting that this was because the previous website update failed would gain candidates a second mark.

Misconception



A minority of candidates did not answer this question accurately because they did not use evidence in Resource 1 to identify a barrier to change faced by Beetz Sweetz, and instead they gave a generic description of a barrier to change that could be faced by the business. Answers to questions on this paper must be based on the actual issues faced by the business in the resource booklet. Generic responses about things that might affect the business will generally not be given any marks.

Question 1 (d)

- (d) Amaya has confirmed that Beetz Sweetz plc will start to produce packet sweets that are suitable for vegetarians within the next few months.

Analyse **four** activities that Beetz Sweetz plc should include in a plan of action to manage this change.

Which one of the four activities is the most important? Justify your answer.

[16]

This question was generally well answered with most candidates able to correctly choose one item that could be included in a plan of action to manage the change to producing vegetarian sweets. Many candidates were able to show the impact of the components of the plan on the success of the change and this meant that they were able to access marks in Mark Band 3.

Where candidates gave a relevant component of an action plan, they gained a Level 1 mark. Where they explained that component, they gained a Level 2 mark. Level 3 marks were given for analysing the impact of the action plan element on the success of the plan.

Level 4 marks were given to candidates who wrote a conclusion justifying a judgement about which element of their action plan was most important if they met two criteria – achieve at least 4 Level 1 marks and at least 1 Level 3 mark.

A large proportion of responses included suggestions such as aims and objectives, training plans and upgrading of machinery. In general, these points were well supported using appropriate evidence from the case study, such as the thoughts of managers that equipment would need to be upgraded.

One mistake that a small proportion of candidates made was to use the stages of a change management model as the components of the action plan. These responses were usually theoretical rather than including practical actions and as such could not be given any marks. On occasion, candidates used stages in a model as the basis for practical actions – for example, candidates' suggestions that the action plan should "create a sense of urgency" that went on to explain that a series of meetings should be planned. In those cases, it was possible to award candidates with marks.

One issue that prevented some candidates from accessing Level 4 marks was the need to include four valid points. If candidates did not give four components of an action plan that were worth a Level 1 mark, along with at least one Level 3 analytical point, it was not possible to give candidates a Level 4 mark.

Misconception



When a question states that responses should include four points, it is not possible to gain Level 4 marks if this is not done, even if candidates write a conclusion.

Centres should prepare candidates to address this type of question that specifies a particular minimum number of points in the response.

Question 2 (a)

2 Refer to **Resource 2**.

- (a) Using the information in **Resource 2**, analyse the unresolved issues that need to be addressed so that Beetz Sweetz plc's change management process remains on track.

Which one of these issues is the most important? Justify your answer.

[16]

Questions 2 (a) and 2 (b) related to Resource 2. Candidates should have used evidence from that resource in their responses. If they did not, they were not able to gain any marks.

Question 2 (a) was the third and final 16-mark question on this paper. Most candidates were able to correctly identify a range of relevant unresolved issues, with many recognising the issues of cross contamination, rising complaints and customer feedback about increasing prices and products that are still not suitable for vegetarians.

Relatively few candidates incorrectly cited the resolved issues from the resource material.

Where candidates gave an unresolved issue, they earned a Level 1 mark. Where they explained that issue, they gained a Level 2 mark. Where they analysed that issue, they gained a Level 3 mark. Level 4 marks were given to responses which gave a justified judgement about which issue was most important and for suggesting why another issue was less important.

Many candidates were able to analyse the unresolved issues, with many able to recognise that Beetz Sweetz may suffer reputational damage if they failed to stop cross contamination and many noting that staff absence rates could lead to production delays and cause customers to cancel orders.

One common error that candidates made on this paper was to propose solutions to the unresolved issues. As these solutions tended to explain how the issue could be resolved without showing the impact of the issue on the business, candidates taking this approach usually restricted their marks to either Level 1 or Level 2.

Another common error was to write a conclusion that simply stated which issue was most significant without giving a justified judgement as to why another was less important. This meant that, while many candidates gained a Level 4 mark, they were not able to access all of the marks in this band.

Misconception



Where a question asks which unresolved issues are most important, candidates do not need to suggest solutions to those issues. They should analyse the impact of those issues. It is possible that in future series, candidates may have to propose solutions or they may have to complete other questions similar to this one. Centres should prepare candidates for both of these types of question and should also be aware that other approaches may be taken to this final extended writing question. Candidates should be prepared to read questions carefully and respond to the demands of the individual question as presented on each paper.

Question 2 (b)

- (b) Beetz Sweetz plc continues to make children's lollipops that are not suitable for vegetarians.

Amaya wants to make another change so that all of Beetz Sweetz plc's products are suitable for vegetarians. To support this change, Amaya is considering using Kotter's 8 step process for leading change.

For each of Kotter's steps shown below, describe **one** appropriate action that Beetz Sweetz plc could take to support the success of this change.

- Create urgency

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- Form a powerful coalition

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- Remove obstacles

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[6]

This question tended to be challenging for candidates. Many were able to gain 1 or 2 marks for suggesting a way to address the given steps. In order to achieve 2 marks for a single step, candidates had to give an action that could be taken and explain how it works. For example, for creating urgency, they could have suggested holding a meeting to gain 1 mark and then explained that this would need to give evidence of why the change was important.

A common error made by candidates was to explain why the different stages of the model might be important rather than how they could be practically implemented.

Assessment for learning



Candidates need to be familiar with different change management models such as Kotter or Lewin and should be able to explain how each stage works, how it can be implemented and other applications of the models.

Candidates should be given opportunities to practise applying these models to unseen case studies.

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