

CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)

Examiners' report

BUSINESS

05834–05837, 05878

Unit 15 Summer 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

This series has seen similar standards in the quality of candidate responses to those in the last two series, with candidates generally using good exam technique to effectively analyse the issues faced by the case study business. The context of a manufacturing business seemed relatively accessible to the majority of candidates with most able to select appropriate evidence from the case study to inform their responses.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made accurate and selective use of contextual data as the basis of their response to each question • made appropriate analysis related to the impact of the change to an increase in automation and the production of new products on the Sweet Treats business • used the correct resource material in their responses, utilising Resource 1 for Question 1 and Resource 2 for Question 2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gave generic responses that were not related to the context of a sweet manufacturer • used resource material inaccurately or related resource material to the wrong change management theories • were not able to demonstrate an ability to analyse or evaluate change by explaining a relevant impact on a manufacturing business.

This paper was divided into two questions, each was focused on a different piece of contextual information. The first question focused on the issues arising before a change occurred and the second was based on the issues arising after the change. The first question included two 16 mark questions which allowed candidates to demonstrate the skills of analysis and evaluation. The second question included one such question. Most candidates were able to answer these questions effectively, demonstrating sound exam technique. All questions required candidates to apply knowledge in context, something that the majority of candidates were able to do effectively.

Effective contextualisation of responses is vital throughout the paper.

Generic responses will attract few if any marks. Candidates taking this exam in future windows should make sure that they use the appropriate part of the resource material in their responses. Even for the shorter questions, responses should be linked back to evidence from the resource material.

Question 1 (a)

1 Use Resource 1.

(a) For each type of change below, identify **one** driver of change at Sweet Treats plc.

Technology

.....

Market

.....

Legislation

.....

Economy

.....

[4]

As with previous series and future papers, Questions 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d) in this paper related to Resource 1 and responses to questions in this section should be written with reference to that material. Candidates should not use material from Resource 2 in their responses to these questions.

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of the factors that can act as a driver to change, with the expectation being that candidates would read the case study and identify an example of each type of change driver.

Most candidates were able to successfully identify technological and market drivers with the majority of responses making reference to the installation of new machinery and the increased demand for new flavours.

A minority of candidates were not able to correctly identify a legal or economic change driver. In some cases, candidates made reference to contemporaneous economic issues such as inflation or the cost of living crisis and generic legal issues such as health and safety or equality legislation. Those responses were not given any marks as the issues identified, were not relevant based on the information in the case study. In other cases, candidates mistakenly listed the change in the living wage as an economic factor.

Misconception



For questions such as this, generic responses are not acceptable. Where the question asks candidates to identify factors such as change drivers for the business, this will require a response to be based on the data provided. This means that wider knowledge and understanding cannot be rewarded, as it is not included in the material of the resource document.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Evaluate likely impacts of the proposed change on Sweet Treats plc.

[16]

This was the first 16 mark question on this paper. This question was relatively accessible for most candidates, with a majority able to identify a number of potential impacts from the case study, most significantly the ability of the business to respond to changes in consumer demand, the ability of the business to increase production levels at lower costs and the potential loss of the reputation of Sweet Treats for producing “hand finished” products.

While many candidates were able to gain marks for analysis by linking the changes in output and response to consumer demand to the level of profit and revenue made by the firm or the amount of costs paid by the firm changing, some candidates were unable to analyse these impacts by showing a link to a clear impact on the business. Instead, some candidates explained the how these impacts would affect customers or competitors.

Most candidates were able to use the resource material effectively in their response to this question, selecting appropriate quotations from the case study.

Assessment for learning



In order to gain analysis marks for questions such as this one, candidates need to remember to include two things – how the issue they are considering will affect the case study business and in what way – analysis marks are dependent on a sense of directionality. Will the change lead to an increase or a decrease in key performance indicators such as profit, revenue or costs?

Question 1 (c)

(c) Identify **four** likely barriers to the proposed change at Sweet Treats plc.

- 1
-
- 2
-
- 3
-
- 4
-

[4]

This question tested the ability of candidates to identify the potential barriers to change in the case study. Most candidates were able to identify issues such as the likelihood of inertia (staff wanting to remain in their current departments) and a lack of agreement to the change. A majority of candidates were able to gain at least 2 marks on this question.

Candidates tended to make one of two common errors on this question. Some candidates listed a generic barrier to change that bore no relationship to the resource material. For example, many candidates cited poor leadership of the business. While poor leadership is a barrier to change, it is not one of which there is any evidence in the case study and so no marks could be given for it.

Another common error related to the cost of the investment in new machinery required by Sweet Treats. Many candidates noted that this would be expensive, which was correct, but they were not able to correctly link this to a barrier to change, which was the fact that the business may not have sufficient funds to pay for this investment.

Assessment for learning



The cost of a change programme is an issue that has come up in a number of previous papers, but simply because a change is expensive, does not mean that this is a barrier to change. The real issue here is affordability. Candidates should be encouraged to consider the distinction between an investment being expensive and whether a firm can afford that investment.

Question 1 (d)

- (d)** Produce a plan of action for Sweet Treats plc based on Kotter's theory of change management.

Evaluate the benefit to Sweet Treats plc of basing the plan of action on Kotter's theory.

[16]

This question proved challenging for many candidates. While a number of candidates were able to correctly state the different elements of Kotter's model of change management, relatively few were able to write an action plan based on this model. Answers should have focused on what the business should have done as part of each of the different elements of the model and the extent to which this was a good thing for the business. Few candidates were able to accurately explain the elements of Kotter's model or evaluate how beneficial it might be.

The models of change management have been an area of content where candidates have been less successful in previous papers. Candidates should know the stages of the different change management models and should be able to apply them to different scenarios. In this case, few candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge of Kotter's model beyond naming the different elements within it.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be familiar with each of the change management models in the specification and should be able to apply those models to case studies. Tasks such as the writing of an action plan might be used again in future assessments. Candidates should know how to prepare an action plan using these change management models by providing well clear steps showing how the model could be applied.

Question 2 (a)

2 Use Resource 2.

- (a) Using the information in **Resource 2**, analyse the issues which the directors at Sweet Treats plc still need to address.

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

[16]

This was the final 16 mark question on this paper. Candidates were generally able to accurately select issues that still need to be addressed from Resource 2 and many candidates were able to analyse these issues, for example, noting that staff not being satisfied with their jobs might lead to lower productivity which might in turn lead to a reduction in profits.

In many cases, candidates listed the different issues in order of importance. This often did not achieve the top mark band because, while candidates had placed issues in order of importance, they had not given reasons for their decisions. The most successful responses to this question tended to explain which factor was most important and why another factor was less important at the end. Material from the case study was essential in providing a justification for those decisions.

Assessment for learning



The structure of the response is important. Candidates aiming to access the top mark band should generally write a conclusion at the end of their response to a 16 mark question. The conclusion should sum up evidence analysed in the main body of their response and make a judgement based on that evidence. For full marks, candidates should normally make sure that as a minimum, they include a point that answers the question, with a reason, and at least one other point that does not, also with a reason. Conclusion points should be contextualised wherever possible. Any conclusion should be justified, including a question asking for factors to be prioritised, it is not enough to say that something is important, there must be an explanation of why.

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