

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2012

PL Exploring Retail (RB201) Paper 01

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Level 2 Unit 1 Exploring Retail

General Comments

In general the entry for this series was of a variable quality. It was very clear that a number of candidates struggled to answer questions at this level and centres may consider whether level one would be more appropriate. There were very clear distinctions between the more able level two learners and those that struggled. That said, there were some particularly strong answers capable of achieving high marks.

RB201

The examination questions were designed to cover all four Learning Outcomes (LO) and the majority of associated assessment criteria. Stronger candidates were able to apply their answers to Retail Business. Candidates did less well where they failed to grasp the basic concepts or were unable to apply these to a Retail Business context.

The topics of acquisition, joint ventures, staff appraisals, median averages and public limited company ownership appear to be challenging for many candidates. However rights of staff, discrimination, and staff performance generated some very good answers.

In general candidates need to read the questions more thoroughly to ensure they answer the question. Many candidates were able to gain one mark for a single word answer but often failed to develop their answer for further available marks.

In the questions on the benefits of a proposed joint venture, many candidates gave answers such as 'more money' or 'more ideas' without any real development. Similarly in identifying two factors to consider before opening a joint venture store in Copenhagen most candidates were able to identify consumer or customer needs. Some were able to gain a second mark usually with legal or language factors identified. This occurred again in the question that asked candidates to state two ways joint venture store could impact on the local community; Most of the pass candidates identified an increase in employment as the main impact. There were a few answers that identified local charities or community projects for a second mark.

When asked to outline the term acquisition many candidates made no attempt to answer this question. Stronger candidates were able to clearly identify that this was a form of buying another business, usually using the term 'taking over' to expand.

In the series of questions concerning staff, answers tended to be rather basic. Stronger candidates did give more developed answers. In the question asking for two factors indicating the workforce is not diverse candidates were able to identify that most of the sales staff are male but there was some confusion with the second factor. Many candidates thought this was due to female staff not being promoted rather than the age bias to under 25 years of age. This was followed by the questions asking candidates to identify two rights that staff are being denied. Most of the pass candidates were able to identify that there were no contracts of employment issued. The right not to be discriminated against (in terms of promotion for female staff) was often confused or given as an answer to the previous question.

The questions on staff performance and appraisals generated some interesting answers. On being asked for two measurable criteria to manage staff performance most candidates were able to relate this question to the sales a staff member achieves. The A* answers also identified customer feedback either purposely collected or from letters to the store.

The concept of staff appraisals appears to be a difficult one for candidates to grasp and generally was not very well answered. Candidates were asked to identify two stages in the process of staff appraisals. Stronger candidates were able to identify a meeting with a line or HR manager and that targets could be set. However, the majority of candidates related staff appraisals with 'praise' and thought it was linked to promotion or motivational aspects of the job.

Conversely, the question on sales per employee as a useful performance indicator offered some very good answers. Some of the good answers to this question that stated this measure could be used to identify those staff that performed well and could be rewarded and/or have targets increased. Stronger answers also identified it could be used to identify staff who were underperforming and offered support/ training or be sacked. Very few candidates related the concept of performance indicators with the previous question on staff appraisals.

Very few candidates understood the concept of ownership of a Public Limited Company (plc). In asked about the disadvantages of public limited company ownership a large proportion of candidates thought that public limited company meant a public sector organisation and that it was owned by the government. Stronger answers were able to identify that anyone could buy shares, there may be loss of management control and that profits would have to be shared amongst a greater number of people.

In terms of risk taking, good answers to this question were able to equate risk with potential loss. Risk was usually discussed in terms of introducing something new and not knowing what might happen. The most common example used was the introduction of electrical goods into the company when staff did not know very much about the products.

There were some difficulties in the question on the use of the median as an average measure to compare annual earnings. This question was one of the weakest answered across the paper. Good candidates were able to explain that the median was the central measure. However, very few tried to apply it to the comparison of annual earnings. Most candidates who made any attempt at application usually applied it to sales figures. There were only two or three attempts to relate it to annual earnings.

The development question on the importance of support mechanisms to manage staff stress levels offered some very solid answers at the upper levels. Candidates were able to identify the issue of stress as a management problem and that it could lead to further issues for the business. Most candidates were able to identify cause and effects of stress. The weakest section in this question was in the area of identifying support mechanisms. The stronger answers identified training requirements and 'someone to talk to' but no one identified welfare offices or health promotion within the business as a support mechanism.

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