



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
January 2011**

Economics

413011

(Specification 4135)

Unit 11: Personal Economics

Report on the Examination

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General comments

This was the second examination of the new GCSE Economics Unit 11 paper. As with the first paper, most candidates were able to access this paper and the number of answers with little or nothing in them was very small. The vast majority of candidates provided answers to all the questions in the paper.

There were some very impressive answers, demonstrating candidates' ability to analyse different perspectives and arrive at well-reasoned judgements. More-able candidates had clearly read the data very thoroughly and **used the information** to construct some well-organised answers. Candidates should be encouraged to allow time for reading the various Items on the paper. The information in these Items is there to help candidates with the questions in that section. Unfortunately, a few candidates still do not use the information as fully as they should.

Many candidates showed a high level of knowledge of the terms and concepts needed for this paper and a number of candidates scored very high marks for their knowledge. In those questions that required this knowledge to be applied to the context of the question, there was again evidence of candidates being well prepared for what was required in these answers. A smaller number of candidates simply reproduced knowledge that they had been taught and failed to apply it to the question that was being asked. An example of this was in **1(c)** where several candidates were able to identify benefits of budgeting but then failed to say what the benefits would be **to Debbie and Alex** – which was what the question asked for.

The Quality of Written Communication was generally very good.

There was little evidence that candidates struggled with time in the examination and most produced additional answers of appropriate length for each question.

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates easily scored two marks on this introductory question.
- (b) Again most candidates scored two marks. Those that did not generally described types of savings accounts instead of a place.
- (c) Most candidates were able to identify two benefits of budgeting. Those who had read Item A thoroughly were able to apply the benefits to Debbie and Alex and refer to how budgeting, for example, would help them to not run short of money towards the end of the month. A few candidates did identify two benefits of budgeting but made no reference to Debbie and Alex and so only gained two marks, and not four.
- (d) This question was well answered with some very pleasing attempts at numerical analysis using the data given in the question. To get full marks it would have been sufficient to explain just one effect of the rise in interest rates on Debbie and Alex's decision, as long as the explanation was thorough.
- (e) Many candidates missed a key word in this question. Perhaps this was a consequence of not reading the question carefully enough and I would encourage centres to practice breaking down questions so that none of the key elements are missed. The word that candidates missed was 'and' with the result that a significant number of answers only referred to choices made about spending. To get full marks it was essential to explain choices in relation to spending **and** earnings.

- (f) This 12-mark question was used to assess Quality of Written Communication and, as most candidates were able access the data and write a response to the question, it did not limit their marks. Indeed, there were some very good answers to this question with many students able to access higher level marks. There was some impressive engagement with the data and the best answers contained an analysis of both of the options presented. A large number of candidates were able to arrive at a well thought-out recommendation. However, it is important to remind candidates that recommendations do need to be reasoned. Simply running through the advantages and disadvantages of each option and then saying, for example 'I think Debbie and Alex should borrow from the car dealer' will not get the highest level on evaluation. Such a judgement has to be justified in some way. There was no single correct recommendation to this question; any well-reasoned judgement could get the maximum marks.

Question 2

- (a) This proved to be highly accessible with most students easily obtaining two marks.
- (b) Generally, this was well answered and most candidates gained the full three marks. Those who did not, as with **1(e)**, missed some key words in the question. So, again the advice is to read the question carefully and break down the various elements. The key phrase missed was 'similar jobs'. Those candidates who did not read this, or who did not take on its importance, made reference to the job at the mobile phone company requiring a lot more skills, which it clearly did not.
- (c) Again, this was generally well answered. The easiest route to top marks was to say workers would look for fringe benefits like a free or discounted mobile phone. This answer showed the knowledge and explained it with relevance to the scenario. Candidates should always be encouraged to give examples that are relevant to the context of the question. With this answer, it was relatively easy to put answers in context as examiners were rewarding factors that were relevant to the phone company **or** to Debbie.
- (d) As with the June 2010 paper, this question again provided some of the best answers on the paper. Most candidates were able to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of each of the two options. Candidates gave a thorough critique of both options and made clear the link between training and the potential for higher pay in the future tended to do well. The reason for Debbie considering the two options was so that she could get an **increase in pay**. Examiners were thus looking for evidence of this link. As with question **1(e)**, the importance of justifying a recommendation must be stressed. In this case, candidates were able to write at length on each of the two options. A few candidates then wrote very rushed conclusions that did not access the higher level evaluation marks.

Question 3

- (a) Most students were able to secure at least one mark by saying the goods are cheap. Those that then explained that this enabled them to sell at a cheaper price were able to get the extra mark. Other explanations were equally acceptable.
- (b) I found the answers to this question to be some of the most enjoyable to read. Candidates were able to communicate some very good points, particularly around the ignorance of many consumers in relation to ethical issues. It was evident that candidates had studied this area well. If a candidate failed to get full marks it was often because they wrote at length on one reason when the question clearly asked for **reasons**.

- (c) As with the previous 12-mark questions, this was generally answered well but, of the three, there were fewer candidates gaining full marks on this. Yet again it was an example of where a significant number of candidates failed to read the question carefully enough or got so engrossed in their answer that they then forgot to fully answer the question. The question asked for ‘best actions’ but some candidates only referred to one type of action. The question also asked for actions that could ‘influence **retailers**’ and too often there was insufficient reference to retailers in some answers. As with the previous question, there was evidence that this topic had been studied well. There were some fascinating ideas put forward for appropriate actions, with internet campaigns being one of the most popular.

Summary

In order for candidates to improve, it is important to give advice to centres after each examination sitting. Some of this advice was given after the last paper and it is still very relevant.

Firstly, candidates must remember to relate their answer to the question being asked. Candidates are rewarded for application as well as knowledge. Thorough reading and using the data in Items A–C will help candidates to put answers into context. Secondly, candidates should put effort into planning their conclusions to the questions that carry evaluation marks. Try to avoid very short conclusions that assume they will be rewarded based on the analysis already carried out. Instead, recommendations should **always** be justified. It could, for example, be justified by saying why one option is chosen and another rejected. It could also be by saying why certain option(s) have more effect(s) than others. Alternatively it could be by linking any conclusion very clearly to the situation that has been described in the question. These are some approaches, there are others and they will vary depending on the question being asked.

Finally, encourage candidates to read questions carefully so that key words are not missed as they plan their answers. This was a particular issue on at least three questions on this paper.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.