



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

**Applied Business
(Double Award)**

413004/5/6

(Specification 4136)

Unit 4: People in Business

Unit 5: Marketing and Customer Needs

Unit 6: Enterprise

Report on the Examination

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General

A variety of approaches were used by centres with, inevitably, some approaches being more successful than others. Much of the work attempted was interesting and challenging. Marking and internal moderation was usually accurate.

Units 4 and 5 are based on previous units from the old specification with which they share some characteristics. Centres should note, however, that these are new units, with new content and tasks. The majority of the tasks that formed the previous units are no longer valid, so it is disappointing, not only to see students attempting them, but also to see that annotation often points to marks being awarded for them. Centres are strongly advised to base activities and exercises on the new specification, its tasks and its assessment criteria.

A specific issue this year was that some centres had either appeared to use more than the seven allocated hours for the final write-up, or students had failed to separate their research from the controlled assessment phase. This tends to be unfair to the students who produce such lengthy pieces of work as it is generally the case that few additional marks are gained for excessive amounts of additional work.

Assessment

Centres should note that assessment is based on the three tasks set for each unit so the vehicle for assessment is the tasks, rather than the content of the specification. Students should use the content which they have been taught in order to complete the tasks appropriately. There is therefore no requirement for students to demonstrate, in the assessment, every piece of content or theory that they have been taught. Each task covers all three Assessment Objectives (AOs). Tasks A, B and C are not limited, in turn; to AO1, AO2 and AO3 so AO3, for example, can be achieved in task A just as well as it can in task C.

Two folder approach

Centres are increasingly and effectively using the 'two folder' approach, with a folder of research and information collected during the 17 hour preparation stage being taken into the final, seven hour, controlled assessment phase.

Students are then able to use this information to support their individual responses, including using appropriate parts of it as appendices. This allowed them to reach the higher levels, where they can 'select and organise' information, 'apply effectively and consistently skills, knowledge and understanding' and draw up conclusions based on 'analysis of selected data' and an 'evaluation of its significance'.

Presentation

There is a requirement in the specification for students to produce evidence that they have prepared a presentation. Centres should, therefore, be seeking to provide evidence of preparation for a presentation in an appropriate and readable format. This should not be looked on as a purely mechanical exercise, but made into an integral part of the task, so that students are deriving some benefit from it. This does not have to be in the form of 'power point slides' but can also be shown through notes, cue cards, diagrams, or commentaries. It should also be noted that such evidence only needs to cover the specific part of the content referred to in the appropriate part of the specification and not the whole of the content of that particular section. Often the content of this work appears to be neither annotated nor rewarded by teachers.

Annotation

Annotation should show, not just where Assessment Objectives have been demonstrated, but the level at which such evidence is judged to be. Annotation should therefore consist of an Assessment Objective and a level clearly linked to the work. Annotating a whole page as 'AO2', for example, is of little use in determining marks and levels. Annotation can be supported by explanatory statements on the cover sheet, or by accompanying notes. Such notes and explanations should refer to the assessment outcomes of the student, rather than make the case on a personal level. Whether a student is 'lazy' or 'hardworking' should have no bearing on the assessment.

In the best examples, annotation is precise and accurate, showing where both levels and marks within levels had been awarded, often supported by a commentary on an additional cover sheet.

One feature of controlled assessment is that, like an examination session, it is a final piece of work completed by the student. There is therefore no need for formative comments directed at students, as they will have no opportunity to act on such advice. Once the controlled assessment is complete, it should be marked and annotated in a summative way for moderation.

Completing Task C

In each unit, Task C was still the least well completed of the three. This task should be given due prominence as it is the reflective and evaluative task where students can draw conclusions and show skills of judgement and analysis. In Unit 4, students consider the business as a possible place of future employment for themselves; in Unit 5 students consider whether, taking into account the activities of competitors, the business is successfully meeting customer needs and in Unit 6 students consider the effectiveness of the enterprise activity they have conducted, judging both their own contribution and that of other team members.

In each case, Task C is effectively the synoptic task, the one for which the other tasks provide support. In many cases, however, effort has been concentrated on descriptive tasks linked to Tasks A and B rather than the analysis and judgement that earn the higher marks in Task C.

Unit-specific feedback

Unit 4

This unit tends to be completed first, and may therefore show gaps in knowledge or signs of students struggling to grasp concepts. In many cases a tight 'framework' had been provided for students. This has the advantage of helping lower ability students to reach assessment objectives but also tends to restrict higher ability students from really showing their best.

The use of inappropriate on line personality tests which have often been designed for people changing jobs, or for people who already have a range of qualifications, restricted a number of students. There remains confusion between such personality tests and Belbin's team roles. It is recommended that students consider the main point of the task, which is to show that they understand how such tests are used in business, rather than undertaking them themselves. They are then asked to consider their own personality strengths and how they feel they would fit into the organization studied.

Unit 5

The choice of a suitable business is crucial to the success of this unit. Large businesses, often with complex structures, eg Virgin and its holding companies, Pizza Hut and its franchising operations, McDonalds and its corporate ownership and franchising structure or businesses quoted on Wall Street, eg Facebook, Microsoft and Apple, do not give students the opportunity to 'get inside' the business but, instead, often cause confusion and inaccuracies.

This unit lends itself to some practical approaches to customer needs and customer satisfaction, such as consumer satisfaction surveys and mystery customer exercises. On the whole, therefore, this unit was tackled well where an appropriate business choice was made. Students could then successfully study the activities of competitors and link customer service features to the specific products and target markets of the business. Where inappropriate businesses were chosen, often from the internet, this proved much more of a challenge.

Unit 6

This unit suffers from the use of entrepreneurs chosen because of their websites or TV profile. Often these entrepreneurs are represented by having their own views of themselves uncritically copied from their websites. It is also of little use for a student to make a judgement of the entrepreneurial skills of classmates.

More successful centres made use of local entrepreneurs. This produced more insights and better answers, with students demonstrating some excellent work on a local entrepreneur with which students could engage. Students should therefore be trying to find and relate to local entrepreneurs, who can show and discuss the necessary qualities of an entrepreneur.

This unit tends to be completed towards the end of the course, and many students show admirable maturity and honesty in the judgements that they formulate in Task C.

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