

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCSE

GCSE Business Studies (1503)

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GCSE Business Studies - 1503/01 & 02 (Foundation and Higher Tier)

General Comments

There was much evidence of centres having used the context effectively and used the issues flagged up there to prepare candidates. However, many candidates are answering questions from a generic point of view and not applying their answers to the context. Too many candidates are also not expanding their answers which mean they are cannot reach the higher marks and they are not taking enough notice of the buzz words used in questions which would help them with the type of answer required eg whether the answer needs judgements.

As centres are aware, these papers are marked online, therefore please encourage candidates to write in black ink only as blue or green ink is very difficult to read after the script has been scanned. In addition it would be very much appreciated if candidates did not write below the last dotted line provided for their answer or in the side, top or bottom margins or on blank pages in the answer book. Additional sheets should be used for any extra writing.

Comments About Individual Questions

Foundation Paper - 01

Question 1

1(a) No particular question seemed to cause candidates problems.

1(b)(i)-(v) (i) Although candidates understood that 'fixed' referred to something that stayed the same, many did not understand the difference between an asset and a liability. Rent and bills were extremely common responses.

(iii) Span of control caused some problems with candidates mixing span of control with hierarchy; some candidates missed the point of (v) and answered as if a competitor was concerned with sport.

1(c)(i)-(iv) Candidates answered these questions well.

1(d) Reasonably well done with many candidates going for the online booking facility and 24-hour access. However, there are also many candidates still giving brief answers eg 'easy', 'quick' with no expansion or analysis.

Question 2

2(a)(i) Generally well answered with nearly all candidates scoring at least one mark.

2(a)(ii) Most candidates could give sensible reasons for CGH's location of its hotels. The use of 'why' in the question should inform candidates that they need to evaluate and give judgements in their answer.

2(b)(i) Not many candidates got this basic business fact correct - common responses included directors, limited, stakeholders and managers.

2(b)(ii) Many candidates ignored the types of business organisation/legal structure point of the question and answered from a literal family issues point of view, concentrating on family disagreements or trust between family members. Most could not provide the depth of analysis needed to obtain full marks.

2(c)(i) Very mixed responses to this question - not well answered, with many candidates struggling to give acceptable reasons as to why applicants would be asked to complete an application form. However, there were some candidates that demonstrated good knowledge and applied this to CGH.

2(c)(ii) Whilst many candidates could give a list of advice, few then went on to develop their answers as to why perhaps someone would want to research the business.

Question 3

3(a)(i) Most candidates could give examples of secondary research but some did confuse primary and secondary research methods.

3(a)(ii) Not many good answers seen with few candidates gaining more than 2/3 marks. Where the concept of secondary research was understood, marks were higher.

3(b)(i) If candidates had 'used the context' as instructed it was easy to gain two marks but too many ignored this instruction and gave an explanation of 'target audience' with no reference to the context.

3(b)(ii) Reasonably well answered with most candidates giving sensible and relevant methods of advertising.

3(b)(iii) This proved more difficult for candidates as judgements were called for which many candidates failed to realise, consequently answers were not expanded upon resulting in a failure to gain the higher marks.

Foundation Paper - 01/ Higher Paper - 02

Comments About Individual Questions

Question 4 / Question 1

4(a)(i)

1(a)(i) Generally well answered with most candidates knowing what quality service meant with the most common answers being 'good' and 'meeting the needs of guests'. Where candidates did not gain full marks it was because they did not go into enough detail or just tried to re-phrase the question.

4(a)(ii)

1(a)(ii) The knowledge in (i) was continued through with most candidates knowing the importance of customer service and applying this to CGH with analysis and some judgements giving impressive answers. Some candidates were unable to link quality service with people returning leading to a good reputation and gave basic comments with no development.

4(b)(i)-(ii)

1(b)(i)-(ii) These questions were either done really well because candidates knew economies and diseconomies of scale or badly because candidates had no understanding of the topics because presumably they find it a difficult topic to grasp. Candidates talked about size, referring to increased customers and more profits as well as being well known. Many did not refer to the economy by name simply discussing them generally.

Many candidates omitted the questions and as QWC was attached to these questions, no marks for QWC could be awarded. Some candidates confused economies of scale with the state of the economy and the effect this might have on business.

Where candidates had answered, the most popular economies were bulk buying, financial and specialist personnel. Whilst candidates demonstrated knowledge of these not many went on to explain the benefits they might bring to CGH.

Most candidates who attempted (ii) were aware of the communication problems and issues around this and were able to analyse the effects on CGH with some good answers concerning the effects on staff morale in particular. Many wrote about increased staffing costs and food going off. Where understanding was evident some meaningful and high scoring responses were achieved.

Question 5 / Question 2

5(a)(i)

2(a)(i) Despite the equation being provided many candidates failed to calculate the ratios accurately. The most common mistake was to mix the cost of sales with the sales revenue figures. Even when some candidates did correctly calculate, many failed to show their results as a percentage or ratio. Other mistakes included candidates not rounding up or down correctly, omitting the % sign, putting a £ sign instead or using the gross profit margin by mistake. Some candidates actually wrote on their papers that they did not have a calculator.

5(a)(ii)

2(a)(ii) This question posed problems with many candidates simply regurgitating the figures from the Trading and Profit and Loss Account without demonstrating any analysis or evaluation. The use of the word 'assess' in the question should have alerted candidates to the fact that some evaluation was needed. Some candidates stated simple facts ie sales revenue down, some applied this by stating actual figures and the most common judgement made was that 2006 had been a better year than 2007. Only the better candidates picked up the other evaluate marks for reasons as to why there were differences in the figures.

5(b)(i)-(iii)

2(b)(i)-(iii) The majority of candidates gained full marks for these questions. Where marks were lost it was because the break even point was not labelled in (i) (circling the break even point was not sufficient) or the £ sign was omitted in (iii).

5(b)(iv)

2(b)(iv) Many candidates gave reasonably confident answers demonstrating their understanding of the purpose and benefits of using break even. Some misread the question and answered from the point of view of the benefits of breaking even. Some gave basic statements with little analysis or judgements.

Question 3

3(a)(i) Well answered by the majority of candidates gaining full marks.

3(a)(ii) Some candidates confused induction training with on/off the job and that induction training can be on/off the job depending upon how a company delivers this training. Where there was no confusion many candidates were able to analyse the benefits to CGH - that it would help employees settle quickly and the opportunity to introduce health and safety systems.

3(b) Many candidates related their answers to health and safety and legal issues that have to be provided ie sick pay or talked about theorists. The most common answer was free use of the leisure centre.

3(c)(i) The majority of candidates had sound knowledge of Maslow and gained full marks (even if they did not always have the correct terminology it was evident they understood).

3(c)(ii) Many candidates gave confident and sensible answers referring back to the idea of a quality service being provided and making judgements on what the effects of having a well motivated workforce might be. Some candidates however only listed benefits with little or no analysis or evaluation.

Question 4

4(a)(i) Generic improvements, for example, flashing colours and different fonts typified many answers. Hyperlinks, 24-hour online booking, virtual visit, different languages, frequently asked questions were among the better improvements given. Candidates were asked merely to list but went on to analyse which wasted valuable time and which gained no further marks because there were none available.

4(a)(ii) Generally well answered as candidates explained how the improvements would aid the hotel and what this would mean for the business which gained the application marks. Stronger answers concentrated on ease for customers whilst weaker answers repeated different fonts, pictures etc.

4(b) The recurring problem of confusing unlimited and limited liability was ever present in many answers. Many candidates focused on family issues, as stated earlier, and discussed family disagreements and family trust, rather than the legal company structure of a private limited company as stated in the question. Many disappointing answers seen where it was evident candidates had no knowledge of business ownership which, at this level, is a fundamental concept. Where candidates did demonstrate some knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages many gave generalised answers with very little analysis or evaluation. However, some good answers were seen.

Question 5

5(a) Most candidates could demonstrate an awareness of different methods of market research and the benefits of each and some were able to apply that knowledge to CGH (though not many), however they then struggled to analyse with any clarity. Some candidates went into a different scenario completely and got confused - maybe an answer plan would have avoided this.

5(b) This question was not well answered generally. Many candidates explained what a promotional campaign was but failed to attempt analysis or evaluation. Some candidates did not understand what a promotional campaign was and simply talked about the type of things that could be done to promote the hotel ie advertise via billboards, TV. Despite this being flagged up very prominently in the context it was very disappointing that candidates stated mainly advertising methods and nothing about the aims of a promotional campaign ie to promote/inform/gain attention/create desire. Despite this, some very impressive and strong answers were seen from candidates who understand promotional campaigns/aims and were able to produce superb answers demonstrating excellent analysis and evaluative skills.

A very small minority of candidates missed the point of the question completely and discussed being promoted within a job and the aims/benefits to the business/employee.

On a general point, candidates are advised, especially with the longer essay-type answers, to prepare some kind of answer plan. This concentrates thoughts and ideas and enables candidates to offer sensible, well-planned and logical answers. In addition, reiterating and emphasising what was said earlier, unless a question asks candidates to 'state', 'list', 'identify', 'give', 'name' then it will be expected that answers should be expanded upon and usually applied to the context.

GCSE Business Studies - 1503/03 - (Coursework)

General Comments

The marketing assignment remains most popular with communication again taking second place. Centres that submitted coursework relating to finance and franchises again fell. Candidates generally performed well against AO1, AO2 and some aspects of AO3. Many candidates continue to carry out suitable research and then do not make good use of that research to access AO3 and AO4.

Candidate performance for this series was in line with past series. Candidates whose research into a business or problem generally demonstrated clear thinking and presented work of a high standard. Candidates achieved across the full range of available marks. The level of poorly presented work was less evident for this series. The use of ICT was almost 100%.

There is still evidence that some centres still do not carry out effective internal moderation or that internal moderation is not happening when it should. Where more than one teacher is marking candidates' work internal standardisation must take place. This can be undertaken in a number of ways: a marking exercise where all teachers mark a limited number of pieces of coursework and agree a common application of the criteria; cross marking, checking by one teacher of a sample from another teacher. Centres that demonstrated good practice in this series either indicated their internal standardisation on Record Sheet or OPTEMS.

Annotation / Centre Admin

Annotation was generally good this year. Most centres now annotate at the point that the criteria are being given although a number of centres still annotate at the top of each page or, in the most difficult manner for Moderators, on a page at the start of the coursework sample. Centres are politely reminded that the best practice remains, annotation at the point of award. Those criteria that can be awarded throughout should continue to be placed at the beginning of the coursework. Centres not annotating coursework will continue to have it returned by their moderator for annotation.

Authentication processes were much improved this year and it was rare that Moderators had to contact centres on this issue. Errors in the transfer of marks to the OPTEMS were seen occasionally this year. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to inform Edexcel if they are informed by their Moderator that their original marks are not correct. A few centres are still not checking that the indicated sample on the OPTEMS does include the top and bottom mark for the centre. If this is the case the centre must add these to the indicated sample.

The best candidates continue to have a clear structure and sequence to their work. One benefit of such a structure is an action plan with appropriate deadlines and evidence that it has been a working document. A few centres are providing candidates with a structure that is considered to be too tight. Some centres continue to use writing frames and these can limit access to AO3 and AO4 for candidates. In a similar vein there continues to be a theoretical approach by some candidates with an over-reliance on textbooks and/or the internet and little evidence of the knowledge being applied to the business or problem. In such cases

access to AO3 and AO4 will prove difficult to access. A number of candidates have action plans which bear little or no relation to the coursework submitted.

The majority of coursework continues to make good use of ICT. The main software remains word processing and spreadsheets. Fewer candidates used databases or DTP this series. The submission of over-long pieces of coursework continues to fall, although it remains an issue for some centres. Such centres appear to encourage candidates to include in their coursework every piece of preparatory work they have undertaken - this is not necessary; nor is it necessary to include every completed questionnaire.

Assistant Moderators generally reported fewer problems, other than those already mentioned above. However, a few remains:

- Each page of the coursework is submitted in a separate plastic wallet - the moderation team would be happy if all work came with a treasury tag attaching the pages.
- Some candidates still submit work of a purely descriptive nature that makes it virtually impossible to access AO3 and AO4.
- Inaccurate transfer of marks from the Record Sheet to the OPTEMS
- Late submission of the sample

Centres are thanked for their continuing monitoring of the use of photocopied material and Internet resources. This problem was about the same as for the last series. Centres should remind candidates that most moderators are teachers of this specification and are aware of the sources that candidates can and do access.

This report again concludes with a section that highlights those criteria that are often incorrectly awarded or not awarded at all. Again, no excuse is made for its repetition. The criteria included are there for the simple reason that most Moderators have referred to some or all of them in their post-moderation reports.

- 1.2 Candidates are **simply** asked to list their sources of knowledge - this could be in the form of an information log. It is still a constant surprise to find good candidates who do not gain this criterion. A bibliography on its own is insufficient as that is only one source ie texts. The other three are people, organisations and electronic. The candidate who writes:

Ms A N Other, my Business Studies teacher (*people*);
Understanding Business by R Branson (*text*);
Tesco plc (*organisation*);
<http://www.bized> (*electronic*);

will have covered all four sources and **identified** each.

- 1.3 This award can only be for **business** and not personal aims/objectives related to the 'doing of' the coursework - the latter continues to be still given by some centres.

- 1.6 Where the word **consider** appears in the criteria (1.6, 1.7, 2.4, 3.6, 4.4, 4.6) it is expected that candidates will show that they have thought about and not just described, for example, in 1.6, a simple sentence that just states or describes an influence is insufficient for this award.

- 1.8 Candidates are expected to demonstrate **sound** knowledge or to show that they recognise relationships within the subject content.
- 1.9 When this is awarded it is the **critical** element that must be present. If it is awarded for *make comparisons* then actual comparisons of two pieces of knowledge is required and not a separate description of each piece. In 1.8 and 1.9 lists, that purport to be critical or a comparison, are unlikely to be meeting the requirements.
- 2.3 This remains an easy mark - candidates simply have to state what they are going to do (in the future tense). If they then clearly indicate deadlines then 2.6 can be given. This year a greater number of candidates did achieve 2.9, usually through comments on their action plans that showed change, the reason for those changes and how this impacted upon their knowledge requirements.
- 2.4 Too many candidates continue to just state the terms of an Act of Parliament and do not apply it to their business or business problem. A simple statement of the main terms of any Act of Parliament is insufficient evidence for this criterion. Candidates who do this are demonstrating their knowledge (AO1) and not applying it (AO2).
- 2.7 This criterion requires candidates to do three things at least twice: (i) recognise strengths (ii) recognise differences and then (iii) make decisions. Usually it is (iii) that is absent because there is no clear and direct link between decisions and strengths and weaknesses. Candidates who do SWOT and or PEST will only meet (i) and (ii) initially. If they do not then show how the SWOT and or PEST comments relate to two decisions then 2.7 cannot be given.
- 3.4 This criterion continues to be under-awarded even when there is clear evidence of either three sources of knowledge or an ability to organise as does 3.5 in the work of many candidates.
- 3.7 There must be clear evidence of the system that the candidate has used to gather their information from a wide range of sources. Often awarded when 1.2 has not been awarded - this is impossible. A list of four sources with no system evidenced is insufficient evidence for this award.
- 3.9 The report or presentation should be in a recognisable business format.
- 4.5 Still rarely correctly awarded. There must be evidence of (i) the facts, (ii) the opinions from which candidates will (iii) draw limited conclusions. This series more candidates had a clear understanding of the requirements for this criterion and were correctly given it. However, these were in the minority and too often candidates were given this award incorrectly.
- 4.7 Whilst outcomes are given and evaluated, possible improvements are usually missing: again note the plural. Candidates should also note that evaluation and suggested improvements must relate to the business or problem they have been studying.
- 4.8 To achieve this award candidates have to do **three** separate things. They must (i) produce the detailed evaluations, which must contain (ii) suggestions for improvements and such suggestions, must be (iii) justified.

4.9 The effects, whether financial, social or environmental must be linked to the candidates' suggestions.

Grade Boundaries - June 2008

1503/01 - Foundation Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G
Raw boundary mark	105	49	40	31	22	13

1503/02 - Higher Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D
Raw boundary mark	105	69	62	55	48	39

1503/03 - Coursework

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Raw boundary mark	76	69	59	49	40	32	24	16	8

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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