

GCSE

Edexcel GCSE

Business Studies: Short Course
(3503)

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Examiners' Report

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3503/01 & 02 – Business Studies: Short Course Written Papers

General Comments

Both examination papers again consisted of four questions (two common to each level) worth 15 marks each, with 3 marks available for the quality of written communication. Each paper functioned as expected, with no common misinterpretation or misunderstanding of what was required. Candidates were able to complete both papers in the time allowed, with most attempting all parts of all questions. The paper contained sufficient space for candidates' answers.

This examination sets questions based on a pre-seen context. The context used was *Excel Pictures plc* (EPP), a film production and cinema group. Most candidates understood the importance of relating their answers to the given context, and many did this well.

Marks for the Foundation paper were broadly in line with those of recent series, although there was a lower mean mark for candidates who sat the Higher paper. Many candidates gave a strong final answer to the last question in both papers. The overall standard of written communication was again of a good standard, which made it a relatively easy task to read and mark the scripts.

Question 1 (Foundation only)

This question always starts with three multiple-choice questions. In (a) few candidates obtained the full marks although a majority did manage two correct responses. The same comment can be made of (b) where some candidates could not manage one correct response. The performance, on what are basic knowledge-based questions, continues to disappoint.

Part (c) saw most candidates capable of reading data from the graph - parts (i) and (ii) - but there was a weakness in the response to part (iii) where many candidates did not take into account the requirement that they analyse the 'total attendance'. Too often candidates analysed the changes by age group because they had failed to read the question with sufficient care.

Most candidates were capable of gaining 3 or 4 marks in part (d). A few candidates made up their own list, an indication that they had not read the question with sufficient rigour.

Part (e) saw hardly any candidates gaining a zero mark. A satisfying number recognised the relationship between the target market and, therefore, the unsuitability of these quiz cards.

Question 2 (Foundation only)

Part (a) (i) was not well answered. Few candidates mentioned a line of authority or that it enables order/work to be passed down. Often candidates were not capable of providing an example, ie Holly Hinton giving orders to cleaning staff. The same comment can also be applied to part (ii) where phrases along the lines of number of subordinates, direct responsibility and appropriate examples were rare finds.

In part (b) most candidates gained one of the two marks available when they related the act to discrimination. Some candidates then gained the second mark by applying this to the writing/wording of the advertisement.

In part (c) (i) many candidates repeated the question as their response whilst others appear to have misread the question and gave responses that had more to do with what was on the posters rather than concentrating on the advantages and disadvantages of using posters. Part (ii) saw few candidates gaining both marks available. The most common response was related to money-off, often repeated in two different ways. Very few candidates gained the second mark, which would have been awarded for references to gift vouchers, loyalty cards and competitions (in the cinema or on product packaging).

Part (d) required candidates to discuss which of two forms of advertising was the more persuasive and the more informative. Only a very few candidates failed to gain any marks on this question. The best candidates gave good evaluative responses, thus gaining four or five marks. The majority of candidates gain two or three marks by making basic comments relating to television and local newspapers that did not always take account of the context. Some candidates only responded to one form of advertising, and through this only had access to a maximum three of the five marks available.

Question 3 Foundation / Question 1 Higher

Part (a) produced some strong answers about the bank loans as a source of finance, though fewer candidates were able to describe features of share capital that differentiated this source of finance from loans, with many candidates wrongly referring to share capital as an 'asset' (bank loans being correctly classified as 'liability').

Part (b) required examples for fixed and current assets. There were generally stronger knowledge of fixed assets, and some candidates selected fixed assets when attempting to give examples of current assets.

In part (c) (i), few candidates were able to state succinctly the difference between gross and net profit. Those who used the words 'costs', 'expenses' or 'overheads' obtained the mark. Many gave good answers to part (c) (ii), although a lot ignored the fact that the financial information was '£000', and therefore incorrectly gave '£25' as the answer. Part (iii) was less well answered, with many candidates failing to explain why it is important for any business to know its financial performance as shown in the Trading, Profit & Loss account.

Question 4 Foundation / Question 2 Higher

This common question was not well done by many. Methods of production have regularly been examined, and therefore candidates should have been able to describe the key features of job and batch production in (a) and (b) respectively. There was a general lack of knowledge of batch in particular, with many candidates confusing it with mass production. The better answers concentrated on the unique aspect mentioned in part (a), and the fact that sweets come in a variety of types and flavours in part (b).

There was a reasonably good understanding of stock control in (c), although only the stronger candidates were able to contextualise effectively their answers. This was less of a weakness in (d), with a substantial number of candidates scoring at least two of the three marks available, normally by concentrating on the training that would be required in this situation.

Question 3 (Higher)

There was good knowledge shown in part (a) about the Disability Discrimination Act, although many candidates described its provisions in general terms and therefore failed to answer the question as set. Other candidates contextualised the Act satisfactorily, although they were often content to simply list examples of changes that EPP would have to make to its cinemas. Stronger answers identified the relevance of the Act in the context of EPP as both an employer and as a service provider to the general public.

Answers to part (b) were generally satisfactory. There were not necessarily 'right' answers to how each of the three trends identified in the question would affect the work of EPP, and the stronger candidates often analysed the trends as 'for' and 'against' an increase in custom. Better answers included analysis referring to action that EPP might take in each situation, thereby relating their answers to its 'work' as required by the question.

Question 4 (Higher only)

Part (a) tested candidates on their knowledge of market research. This part was designed as a (relatively) easy lead-in to part (b), and many candidates gained at least two marks for identifying and clarifying the general nature of market research. Only a few, however, went on to consider the influence of both primary and secondary research methods in this situation.

Part (b) asked candidates to 'evaluate', and many gave full and well-argued answers here. This question was designed to give candidates the opportunity to produce an extended evaluative answer, and high marks were often gained compared with some recent series. It was difficult for centres to anticipate a question on this topic in this context, and so there was little evidence of pre-rehearsed answers being given. Many candidates showed a good standard of knowledge of both pricing and promotion strategies, and based their arguments on accurate analysis of the trends shown in the accompanying chart. Some candidates, however, extended their answers beyond these two 'Ps', typically making irrelevant comments concerning the product and/or possible market research strategies. However, it was again pleasing to see knowledge often being well applied.

3503/03- Business Studies: Short Course Coursework

This is the last report for this specification as it ends with this series.

The entry increased compared with last year.

Annotation was generally clear and usually at the point of award. There was usually a close match between annotation in the coursework and the recording of same on the Record Sheet. Some centres provided additional comments that were helpful. Administration was good with all centres having sent their samples to the deadline given. Authenticity procedures had been effectively addressed by most centres.

The use of appropriate business terminology improved this year but candidates were still including large amounts of material that was not relevant, for example, completed questionnaires. Some candidates are still including tables and graphs that they make no use of. If they did had used them then they would have gained improved access to the criteria for AO3 and AO4.

Candidates generally performed well against AO1 and AO2. There were some improvements against AO3 but AO4 remains a problem for all but the best candidates, even where centres had obviously prepared tasks and guidance to give candidates access.

As this specification now ends, centres are thanked for the assistance they have given to the moderation process and are reminded that Edexcel continues to offer GCSE and Applied GCSE Business specifications.

3503 Statistics

Written paper 1 - Foundation Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G
Raw boundary mark	63	30	25	21	17	13

Written paper 2 - Higher Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D
Raw boundary mark	63	40	35	30	25	18

Coursework paper 3

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Raw boundary mark	76	69	59	49	39	31	23	16	9

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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