

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCSE

GCSE Business Studies - Short Course (3503)

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3503 01 & 02 Business Studies Short course

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 *Dovecotes Dental Practice*. Most candidates understood the importance of relating their answers to the given context, and the vast majority did this well, providing detailed, accurate and relevant answers to many of the question parts. 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.

Comments About Individual Questions

Question 1 (Foundation only)

This question always starts with three multiple-choice questions. In previous series, candidates had performed disappointingly on these, although in this series a higher proportion received all three marks. These items are designed to test candidates' basic business studies knowledge and most candidates identified at least two correct answers. Part (b) produced rather more disappointing answers, with many candidates not being able to identify channels of distribution as an element in the 'Place' section of the four Ps, and even more not realising that EFTPOS is a feature of payment by credit and debit cards.

Parts (c) and (d) were not well answered. There was a lack of understanding as to how net profit is calculated, with many candidates referring vaguely to 'money' and 'tax and other items', and there was also a general inability to explain how overtime is calculated: although many candidates recognised either the extra hours or the extra rate involved, they rarely linked these.

Part (e) was generally very well answered with many candidates achieving all six marks. Part (iii) was the most difficult section, with the less able candidates believing that the percentage change in the number of NHS adult patients (35% to 30%) meant that the number of these patients must have fallen, even though the pie charts confirmed that numbers were in fact the same (300 patients) for both years.

Question 2 (Foundation only)

Part (a) was not well answered. The action verb 'State' requires simple knowledge-based comments to be made, but few candidates could state key features of either batch or flow production.

In comparison, part (b) was well answered. Many candidates used the context effectively, referring to factors such as the need to keep sufficient stock for the dentists, dental nurses and hygienist, with regular references to the importance of controlling stock that needed refrigerating.

Many candidates were awarded two marks of the three available for part (c). The question asked 'To what extent . . .' and therefore a balanced answer was required for all marks. Whilst many candidates acknowledged the value of local publicity in terms of familiarisation and potential extra custom, few considered that the article may not be favourable and therefore may have a negative effect on Lucy's business.

There were many weak answers to part (d). A high proportion of candidates were not aware of the difference between internal and external sources of finance. Those who could name a relevant example of each often failed to 'Advise' Lucy as required. Advice (for the external source, a bank loan having been named) such as "This will provide her with cash quickly but interest will make her pay back more than she borrowed" was extremely rare.

Question 3 Foundation (Question 1 Higher)

This question was generally very well answered. Most candidates gained at least three of the four available marks for (a), although there were some vague or inaccurate references, for example to Lucy doing 'all' the work in the business or never being able - rather than finding it difficult - to take a holiday.

Most candidates recognised the importance of profit in general when answering (b), although only the stronger candidates related this to Lucy's status as a sole trader. Stronger answers included reference to factors such as profits acting as a measure of success or as the key to the potential expansion of the business.

Part (c) (i) was very well answered, with candidates typically referring to the need to keep either customers or employees safe. Part (ii) proved more challenging. There was sometimes a lack of knowledge of how the UK government influences business in terms of health and safety, with relatively few candidates identifying legislation or regulations as an important factor here. Weaker answers tended to focus on the general benefits of a healthy and safe workplace, thereby failing to answer the question as set.

Question 4 Foundation (Question 2 Higher)

Part (a) was reasonably well answered. Most candidates acknowledged that the Race Relations Act attempts to ensure that employment is not influenced by any bias towards or against certain races, although some believed that Lucy would be forced to recruit a (typically) non-white applicant. Stronger answers included brief reference to elements of 'recruiting', by for example referring specifically to interviews.

Part (b) was not well done at all. Most candidates did not recognise the question requirements: specifically, to justify their comments in the context of dental nurses. As a result, many answers included correct knowledge statements concerning job descriptions and specifications, but received no marks unless these were related in some way to the specific employment of dental nurses. Those candidates who actually mentioned dental nurses in their answers, and who justified the factual information by (for example) referring to job description allowing Lucy to judge whether an individual was a suitable candidate for the position of dental nurse, or the fact that a person specification allows dental nurses employed at the surgery to check Lucy's expectations, received most if not all marks.

Part (c) was in one way well answered, with many candidates being able to analyse effectively the strengths and/or weaknesses of using the two different media. However, most candidates ignored the requirement to discuss either rather than both, thereby penalising themselves by wasting time or misdirecting what could otherwise have been good analysis.

Part (d) was generally well answered, although weaker candidates picked up the reference to 'training' in the question stem and over-used this when answering. The examples were as expected, typically three being selected from giving a tour, meeting new colleagues, being introduced to the equipment or computer/filing system, and being taught about the health and safety policy.

Question 3 (Higher)

Part (a) was not well answered. This question required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of batch and flow production: what could have been an easy three or four marks for doing so was often not the case because few could outline even a basic difference convincingly. There was a lot of confusion of flow - and sometimes also batch - with job production, and many candidates were unable to outline a key feature of batch production without repeating the term 'batch': for example, "Batch production involves making products in batches".

On the other hand, there were many detailed and accurate answers to part (b). The stronger candidates typically organised their answers into explaining why over-stocking should be avoided - often using relevant arguments such as stock becoming out of date - and then why under-stocking may cause problems. Effective use of the context was often seen in answers.

Answers to (c) varied greatly in quality. Although many candidates were aware of the value of researching into opening another dental practice elsewhere, few supported their answers by referring to key features of market research. Better answers mentioned, or gave examples of, primary and secondary research, linking these to the context provided by, for example, referring to important features such

as the town's population size, level of competition and the degree of satisfaction amongst current users of local dentists.

Question 4 (Higher only)

Part (a) started in (i) with a test of knowledge as to the difference between public relations and advertising. It was anticipated that the mark for advertising would be almost universally awarded, but there were a lot of candidates who could not describe the purpose of advertising. Answers on PR were in general slightly weaker, though most candidates gained the mark available.

Part (a) (ii) was generally well answered. Some candidates considered both the importance of good PR and the benefits of avoiding bad publicity/PR, though most concentrated on key issues such as establishing or maintaining a good reputation and customer loyalty, with the resultant gain of custom through, for example, word of mouth.

Part (b) was generally the most challenging section on the paper, as anticipated. A large number of candidates either ignored or dismissed bank overdrafts and wrote their own answer to what was, in reality, their own question. The question as set required a detailed consideration of the points for and against the use of a bank overdraft in the given situation, and therefore those candidates who based their answers on other sources of finance gained few if any marks. Stronger answers used elements from the context appropriately, for example in acknowledging that a sum of £25000 may be regarded as too large for an overdraft. The arguments for using an overdraft - its relative informality, speed of obtaining, and flexibility in discharging - were more frequently acknowledged than those against.

3503/03 - Business Studies (coursework)

General Comments

The entry was similar to last year.

Annotation was generally at the point of award and there was a good match between annotation in the coursework and recording on the Record Sheet.

Use of appropriate business terminology improved this year with many candidates showing good knowledge and understanding. Some candidates are still including large amounts of extraneous material that is not relevant, for example, completed questionnaires. Some candidates are still including tables and graphs and which they make no use of. Often if they did make use of them then they would have access to some of the criteria in AO3 and AO4.

Generally candidates performed best against AO1 and AO2. There were some improvements against AO3 but AO4 remains a problem for all but the best candidates.

The final section of this report again details those criteria which many candidates still find problematic.

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.

Candidates can continue to raise their achievement by:

- presenting their action plans in the future tense (2.3, 2.6, 2.9);
- identifying actual sources used by name (1.2, 3.4);
- presenting reports in a recognised reporting format (3.9);
- doing more than just describe (1.6, 1.7, 1.9, 2.8, 3.5, 3.8, 2.7, 4.8);
- presenting original work;
- being concise and keeping the volume of erroneous material to a minimum (eg only material which is capable of being credited).

Grade Boundaries - June 2007

3503/01 - Foundation Tier

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

3503/02 - Higher Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D
Raw boundary mark	63	43	38	33	29	24

3503/03 - Coursework

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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