

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCSE Business Studies (5BS02)
Paper 01

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General comments

This was the third series of the Unit 2 controlled assessment. The trend of improvement noted last year has continued as centres consolidate their understanding of controlled assessment, how it is assessed and how to enable candidates to achieve to their best ability. Performance this year – as measured by the mean mark – was better than last year. Once again there were fewer examples of work submitted which was similar to coursework, as has been present in 2010. Controlled assessment represents a significant departure from coursework, both in terms of how it is completed by centres and candidates, and in how it is assessed.

The important statement from last year on the nature of controlled assessment is reproduced below:

If approached in the correct manner, controlled assessment is an opportunity for candidates to work independently and to demonstrate original thinking on a particular business theme. As such, it should be a fundamentally more rigorous learning activity than coursework. It should involve less work for teachers when compared to coursework. There is no opportunity for candidates to draft and re-draft their work, and to thus impose additional work on teachers. Centres must acknowledge that, given this framework, they are unlikely to get the same distribution of marks that they did under coursework, where marks were often bunched towards the higher end.

A summary of controlled assessment is as follows:

- Candidates have a choice of 5 investigation titles. New titles are published each year.
- There are 4 assessment objectives – Research, Presentation, Analysis and Evaluation.
- The investigation is to be carried out under controlled conditions. Research should be up to 6 hours under low levels of control. The write-up is 3 hours and under conditions of high control. The specification and Controlled Assessment Guide provide further detail.
- The investigation should be of a **small business**.
- All candidates should investigate a different business.

This year there were still some examples of candidates choosing large businesses to investigate. This should be avoided. Teachers are advised to guide candidates towards small businesses. Also, there are still lots of examples of centres requiring all candidates to complete an investigation into the same business. Sometimes this took the form of a visit to a business and candidates all receiving the same source material. Whilst such visits are useful and important in the teaching of Business Studies, this is not the appropriate approach to controlled assessment and is to be

discouraged. At best, such visits should be used as the basis for a practice controlled assessment.

Annotation by centres was better this year and this is another sign of the adjustment to controlled assessment. Centres should understand that the moderator is agreeing (or not) their marking, rather than doing a complete remark of the sample. Good annotation clearly helps this process and enables moderators to see how marks have been arrived at. There is a recommended list of abbreviations that centres can use, but these are not compulsory. Providing the moderator can see how marks have been awarded, this is the most important thing. A series of ticks alongside candidate work is of little use. More valuable are notations as follows:

- *Source of info 1/2/3...*
- *Using Research to address the Q*
- *Simple Analysis – L2*

Once again there were examples of candidates contriving to make a comparison between their business and another. In many cases this only served to confuse the candidates and generally led to less focused investigations.

As also noted last year, there is no expectation or requirement that candidates will word-process their work. We understand the pressures that some centres are under in accessing ICT facilities for controlled assessment. Some of the best work we saw this year was hand-written, and this is no impediment to securing high marks.

In terms of the choice of tasks this year, by far the most popular was Task 4 – promotion and the marketing mix. However, there did not seem to be any one question where students performed better or worse. Task 5, the economic question, was more popular in this series as this was focused on a business, rather than a commodity. This was generally answered much better than last year, with a lot of students being able to make a judgement on the extent to which the business they were using had been affected.

Below is a summary of the main issues arising for each of the different marking criteria:

Research

Centres and candidates should expect that different investigations will require different types of research. There is no simple numerical formula to be applied. For Task 4 – promotion and the marketing mix – candidates were seemingly able to gather lots of examples of their Research. These examples often took the form of photographs, leaflets, flyers, etc.

For Task 1, on the other hand, it was apparent that an interview with the owner of the business was a rich source of information. Different strands of information are likely to be drawn from this interview. In this case the need for a '*wide range of sources*' can be interpreted differently to an investigation into the methods of promotion a business uses.

Task 5 was one task that could make use of both primary and secondary data. By researching the nature of the economic downturn – for example, by gathering data on unemployment, economic growth, etc. – candidates often then looked at evidence from the particular business they were investigating.

For research, quantity **does not** automatically mean a high mark. Some centres are still rewarding the range whether it is appropriate to the task or not. Some centres used generic questionnaires/ interviews with entrepreneurs – but the questions were not always appropriate to their final task.

Note that there is no expectation that candidates will collect both primary and secondary data. The criteria descriptor makes no such requirement. The key term in the descriptor is '*selectivity*'. Has the candidate selected information which is appropriate to the investigation title? For Level 3 (7-9 marks) work must demonstrate '*good selectivity*'. For Level 4 the research must have, '*high-quality organisation ...and focus*'. These descriptors should encourage candidates to **avoid** providing unnecessary detail about the chosen business, such as its history or location. This information is not required in any depth. Similarly with photographs and maps, candidates should by all means use these, but only if they help to address the question.

This year Task 2 – invention/innovation - was designed such that it did not require any primary research to be carried out. This investigation required solely secondary research, although some candidates chose to build their investigation around a particular business. This was not required by the question. Note that, whilst we may use this type of secondary-based question in future series, there is no plan to ensure that such a format will be included every year.

Presentation

The quality of Presentation this year was an improvement on previous series. Candidates are rewarded for presenting their findings using appropriate methods and in terms of their, '*attention to detail*'. For some investigations this may involve presenting statistical data using charts and diagrams. Where an interview has been carried out it may involve relevant quotes being used in the write up.

Organising work into appendices, and making reference to this section, is also an effective method of presenting information. Using charts, maps and photographs will not automatically push an investigation high into marks for presentation. Such techniques must support/clarify the point being made.

Analysis

Performance with analysis was similar to last year. Some candidates perform very well in this area, whilst others struggle. This is the nature of a higher order skill like Analysis. However, even for less able candidates, the skills can be developed and performance improved. It is essential that candidates make use of their research information to address the particular

investigation question. When candidates conduct interviews or surveys, they need to be clear on why they have asked a question. How do their questions link with the relevant concepts and theories that are integral to their investigation? The impression is that candidates feel it is vital to include some form of questionnaire, produce graphs and/or pie charts and then to talk about their findings in general terms with little or no value added being made whatsoever by so doing. Some candidates justify the questions asked by showing the links to the relevant concepts and theories and by including their rationale in the appendices and by referring to each question's validity in the analysis of their findings. Others, however, used quotes as analysis (not rewardable) or made simple or basic statements which did not merit the higher level marks sometimes given.

Evaluation

As with previous series this was the weakest strand for many candidates, although the view of the senior examination team was that performance is improving, with candidates often weighing one factor against another to arrive at a justified conclusion. It is important that the analysis of research data should inform the conclusion candidates arrive at. Note that the descriptor for Levels 2-4 states that, '*... (some/feasible/detailed) suggestions for improvement are identified, where appropriate to the task*'. For some investigations this will not be 'appropriate to the task', and candidates need to be aware of this. Candidates do not need to do this for every title; it depends on which title is chosen.

What was done well?

Some centres are to be commended for their approach to this type of investigation. Moderators saw some excellent, original work from centres that had clearly embraced the new approach.

- **Clear focus on the investigation title** – in previous series we have noted that some candidates/centres have had a tendency to answer what they feel is the question. For example, we have seen in the past comparisons of businesses not required by the question. This year these traits were less in evidence. It is good advice for teachers to keep their students focussed on the specific question. For every piece of research that they are thinking about collecting, encourage them to ask the questions, 'Does this help me answer the question? If so, how?'
- **Range of businesses** – as noted last year, it is clear that, once again, thousands of small, independent businesses have been investigated by candidates. From the candidate's perspective, these investigations are much more meaningful and valuable as learning experiences. Centres are to be commended for the opportunities they are providing for candidates to investigate real businesses.
- **Choice** - the most success once again came from centres where candidates had been given a free choice of the titles and were able to find a business to investigate. Note that businesses need not be unknown to candidates, but more often than not those for which some

contact is already established. Many used businesses which family or friends owned, or where they worked, and this is fine.

- **Presentation and organisation of work** – as noted above, there was some excellent presentational techniques used by candidates. Lots of work was structured clearly in different sections using diagrams, charts, footnotes and appendices.

Areas where centres can improve their practice

Note – some of the information below is reproduced from last year's report as this is still pertinent for centres.

- **Choice of titles** - Centres are encouraged to offer candidates a free choice of investigation titles. By encouraging a spirit of independent work and ownership, candidates are able to engage with their investigation and produce more meaningful findings. Claims from centres that they only offer one title so they can, 'keep control of the process' misses the point of controlled assessment and potentially penalises their candidates. Our advice is to let candidates choose a title and find a business to investigate. Candidates and families can be very resourceful when finding businesses to investigate.
- **Too much structure for candidates** – although not as apparent this year as last, it was once again apparent that some candidates had been provided with too much support and structure. In the most extreme cases, all candidates had done the same title, for the same business, and had used the 'writing frame' provided by the teacher. In some cases the writing frame and guidance notes was actually incorrect, indicating that candidates needed to find primary and secondary sources, needed to provide a summary of the history of the business, and so on. In these cases candidates were effectively penalised by not being allowed to think through their own investigation, but to follow the inaccurate guidance from their teacher. These cases were less prevalent than last year. The best advice is to prepare candidates by allowing them practice investigation, but don't stifle their own research and thought processes.
- **Practice makes perfect** - we are very aware that the skills which are being highlighted in this report as those which candidates need to demonstrate and employ, are not always straightforward for candidates. It is incumbent upon teachers to develop these skills in candidates. Centres are strongly advised to run a practice controlled assessment – but not one based on the current titles – prior to the real thing and to use this as a formative exercise to highlight to candidates what is required. This practice can be referred back to when the real task is being set. Teachers might ask questions such as:
 - What did you do well in the practice investigation?
 - Which assessment criteria did you score less well on?
 - How might you improve your performance with each assessment criteria?

- **Annotation of candidates' work** - appropriate annotation is a requirement of the Ofqual Code of Practice for CA. As indicated above, the annotation of the work was sometimes limited and did not provide much help to moderators in understanding how the marker had been arrived at the levels and marks. It should be remembered that the marking of work is for the benefit of the teacher and the moderator and not for the student since the work cannot be drafted and amended. It is suggested that when judgements are made and supporting reasons/consequences/ causes/ issues/factors etc. are given by the student, these are identified in some way by the marker so that it becomes clear whether high levels of analysis and evaluation are being consistently demonstrated throughout the work.
- **Presenting research/use of appendices** – there is no expectation that candidates should submit their entire research folder. The best practice is where appendices are used which contain the specific information that is referred to in the write-up. **However, please ensure that where marks have been awarded which are based on a particular piece of evidence or research that this is included in the piece which is sent to the moderator.**

Additional support

There is extensive support for teachers in relation to CA from Edexcel. This includes:

Ask the Expert – a service which allows teachers to ask questions of the senior examining team directly –

<http://edexcel-5571.custhelp.com/app/ask/session/L3NpZC9pOUI5cHJfag%3D%3D>

There are new exemplar materials and regular updates on training, including online training on the GCSE Business web site –

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/Business/Business/Pages/default.aspx>

Customised training can be arranged to deal with specific queries that centres have. –

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/Business/Business/Pages/training.aspx>

A publication designed to support students in preparing for CA has also been published by Pearson/Edexcel along with other guidance on CA which appears in the official Edexcel textbooks for the qualification –

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/Business/Business/Pages/Resources.aspx>

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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