

Criterion	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
Marks available	4	6	6	3	3	3	25
Marks awarded	4	3	4	2	2	2	17

Moderator comments

Overall

This commentary is of reasonable quality and is a well presented piece of work. It refers, as required by the *Business and management guide* (March 2007), to a single business organization. The research question is appropriate but lacks some focus. It could invite a range of different responses and approaches. It would have more focus if rephrased. For example, the student could have asked “Can Ford’s ‘Way Forward’ strategy return the company to profitability by 2009?” However, it is a topic that lends itself well to the acquisition of appropriate supporting documents. In many cases a narrower issue for a smaller company may be more appropriate, but the effectiveness of this approach will depend on whether a range of relevant supporting documents is likely to be available.

The commentary is well presented with a contents page, clear separation between each section, clear headings and a well laid out bibliography, giving appropriate references for the supporting documents. A range of theory is brought into the commentary, though in some areas this is perhaps lacking precision and depth in its application.

As specified on page 55 in the guide, “the aim is to find, for each criterion, the descriptor that conveys most adequately the achievement level attained by the student.” “The highest descriptors do not imply faultless performance, but should be achievable by a student.”

Criterion A—Supporting documents

The commentary was awarded 4 marks under this criterion. There was sensible balance in the choice of documents. Two of the documents were from internal company sources and two from different news sources. This helped to give a range of views and some contrast in those views. This gives the student the opportunity to develop discussion and analysis from the supporting documents. The addition of a survey as one of the supporting documents was also helpful in allowing for breadth and developing a “...range of ideas and views”. The choice of supporting documents, while clearly being important for criterion A, will also have repercussions elsewhere in the marking—particularly for criterion C.

The supporting documents, as required by the guide, are of a contemporary nature and were all written a maximum of two years before the submission of the commentary. However, the student has not, as required by the guide (page 52), highlighted the parts of the supporting documents that “... relate directly to [the] commentary.” This is important for this criterion to help with the judgment of the appropriateness of the supporting documents, but will also be something that affects criterion C, making it easier to judge the adequacy of the selection of the data. While a failure to do this has not affected the performance on this criterion in this case, it may have done if the supporting documents had been longer. In this case the benefit of the doubt was given, but it is helpful to moderators if students make clear how the supporting documents have been used.

Criterion B—Choice and application of business tools, techniques and theory

The commentary was awarded 3 marks under this criterion. There is an appropriate selection of theory used but it is superficially applied in several areas. It would perhaps be difficult to put the commentary in level 4 as there are some areas where the application of the theory could be considered lacking in suitable depth. For example, a number of the opportunities in the SWOT analysis could be argued to be internal and therefore not belong in this categorization. This is a common error and one that students should be careful to avoid if at all possible. The points in the SWOT are also lacking in any justification for their categorization. For example, why are “increasing oil prices” a threat? This needs to be more tightly applied and perhaps even quantified before it is possible to argue that the theory has been “suitably applied”. The same could be argued over the application of the Blake and Mouton grid on page 5. This is an interesting piece of theory but is superficially applied.

Criterion C—Use, analysis and synthesis of data

The commentary was awarded 4 marks under this criterion. It is easy to argue that there is an “appropriate selection of data” and there is “appropriate analysis” of the data. A suitable example of this is under the “Accounts” heading where data drawn from supporting documents 3 and 4 is analysed “appropriately”. There is an argument that this could have been analysed in more depth—perhaps with some ratio analysis for example. While effective and generally clear, there are a number of areas where the analysis lacks depth and there is perhaps a tendency for the sections, at times, to appear a little separate. It would, therefore, be difficult to argue that there is “some integration of ideas”. Had the student presented the financial accounts as a supporting document and undertaken a ratio analysis under the headings of profitability, efficiency and liquidity, it is more likely that integration of ideas would have occurred.

Criterion D—Conclusions

The commentary was awarded 2 marks under this criterion on a “best-fit” basis, although in some respects it approaches a level 3. The conclusion is thorough and competently argued with good use of business language and terminology. The recommendations are sensible and in many areas the conclusions are consistent with the analysis within the commentary. However, there are also a number of new areas brought into the conclusions section. SMART targets are new and the conclusion sees the first reference so far in the commentary to the survey (supporting document 5). The conclusion also lacks any reference to the issues raised under the “Leadership” heading. While these may be considered relatively minor criticisms, it does tend to reduce the consistency of the conclusions with the evidence drawn from the supporting documents and therefore reduces the commentary to level 2 on this criterion.

Criterion E—Evaluation and critical thinking

The commentary was awarded 2 marks under this criterion. While there is clearly some evaluation (evident, for example, in the conclusion and in the accounts section), the judgments drawn from the evidence are not always clearly justified. Closer and more detailed reference to the evidence from the supporting documents would perhaps have helped substantiate the conclusions to a greater extent and improve the performance under this criterion.

Criterion F—Presentation

The commentary was awarded 2 marks under this criterion. The commentary is sufficiently organized and structured with business terminology being used appropriately throughout. Although some footnoting is used and an appropriate bibliography is given, sources are not appropriately referenced. On a “best-fit” basis, it has been awarded a level 2. Dates of access of the web sites are generally given along with full web addresses, though it is also important to give the dates of publication of the web articles to ensure that they meet the commentary requirements.