



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

AS BUSINESS (NEW)

SUMMER 2016

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BUSINESS
General Certificate of Education
Summer 2016
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 1

General Overview

The first sitting of the new specification elicited a full range of results from centres across Wales. Some excellent knowledge and examination technique were demonstrated and some very impressive responses were offered. However, many candidates did not attain their full potential for a variety of reasons. The failure to make full use of the information provided in the data to help construct and develop responses was very evident. Candidates would be well advised to spend more time thoroughly reading the data provided in the examination paper and less time providing unrequested definitions at the beginning, and repetitive conclusions at the end, of their responses. The general level of written communication is a concern, with the inability to express themselves clearly and logically hampering a significant number of candidates when attempting to analyse and evaluate. Centres would be well advised to place greater emphasis on the development of exam technique in order that candidates can achieve across the full range of assessment objectives.

Question specific comments

1. This knowledge based opening question was generally answered well with the majority of candidates offering three or four relevant points related to apprenticeships. A number of weaker responses seemed to confuse apprenticeships with work experience placements.
2. Those candidates who achieved full marks were able to clearly demonstrate their understanding of both inferior and normal goods and the concept of positive and negative income elasticity. Most candidates were able to offer examples of both inferior and normal goods in the context of goods for sale in a supermarket. However, the majority of responses were not well analysed and clearly a significant number of candidates had little knowledge of the concept at all. This resulted in a low mean mark for this question.
3. A straightforward knowledge based question which the majority of candidates found very accessible. Poor technique was demonstrated by those candidates who chose to write responses which were far too detailed for a two mark question.
4. The task required the candidates to demonstrate the full range of assessment objectives and some excellent, well-evaluated responses were presented. Middle range responses did not always clearly demonstrate a full understanding of the concept of price elasticity of demand and terminology was often incorrectly used, with far too many candidates referring to elastic or inelastic coffee. It was surprising to witness the number of candidates who stated that if demand was inelastic, then there would be no change in quantity demanded as a result of a price rise, or that quantity demanded would in fact rise! Candidates often failed to appreciate the impact upon 'revenue' and persistently confused the concept with 'profit'. Weaker responses tended to be anecdotal, discussing the relative merits of coffee shops and the products that they offer.

5.
 - (a) Knowledge of quantitative and qualitative data was generally very good and candidates were able to distinguish between them. Those candidates who failed to apply the information provided in the text did not attain the AO2 marks on offer - a clear example of poor examination technique.
 - (b) Producing the lowest mean mark of all the questions on this paper it was evident that the majority of candidates did not understand the approach to gathering a random sample. A minority of candidates attained all four marks on offer, demonstrating sound knowledge of this area of the specification.
 - (c) The use of random sampling methods in helping to eradicate bias when conducting market research was generally well understood and the fact that 'every member of the population has an equal chance of being interviewed' was often expressed. Those who applied the information given in the text effectively, gained all four marks. Yet again, however, weaker responses failed to take this opportunity and often only achieved half the marks on offer.
6.
 - (a) Lots of sound knowledge demonstrated in relation to the sources of finance available to sole traders. Top responses were able to analyse the suitability of the sources they chose, as well as evaluate the impact that adopting such a source of finance might have on the sole trader's business. Poor examination technique was demonstrated by those candidates who failed to evaluate the sources of finance they chose, thereby sacrificing the three AO3 marks on offer.
 - (b) Almost the entire cohort attempted this question – indicating that time was not an issue for the vast majority of candidates in relation to this paper. This clearly constructed question produced some impressive responses. Top answers adopted a logical approach and making full use of the data provided, applying it appropriately and in context: overall conclusions were then drawn.

Sound communication skills are particularly important in extended tasks such as this and a failure to plan their response effectively hampered the progress of many. There were a significant number of candidates who approached this from the perspective of forming a partnership and not a private limited company. Again, this is a clear reminder to candidates to read the questions carefully and undertake the tasks in the context that is set.

BUSINESS

General Certificate of Education

Summer 2016

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 2

General Overview

The first sitting of the new specification elicited a full range of results from centres across Wales. Some excellent knowledge and examination technique were demonstrated and some very impressive responses were offered. However, many candidates did not attain their full potential for a variety of reasons. The failure to make full use of the information provided in the data to help construct and develop responses was very evident. Candidates would be well advised to spend more time thoroughly reading the data provided in the examination paper and less time providing unrequested definitions at the beginning, and repetitive conclusions at the end, of their responses. The general level of written communication is a concern, with the inability to express themselves clearly and logically hampering a significant number of candidates when attempting to analyse and evaluate. Centres would be well advised to place greater emphasis on the development of exam technique in order that candidates can achieve across the full range of assessment objectives.

Question specific comments

- Q1:1 This straightforward knowledge based question discriminated well. A pleasing number of the cohort achieved all four marks on offer, using a variety of routes in achieving their goal. Lower scores were characterised by superficial or repetitive answers.
- Q1:2 Top responses identified benefits which were correctly applied to the case in point and developed their response using sound analysis. Surprisingly a significant number of candidates did not understand the term 'shop floor workers' and did not write in the context of a factory floor; instead relating their response to employees working in a retail store. Another example indicating the need to read the data provided with care.
- Q1:3 This question was characterised by a good deal of repetition and poor use of terminology. Many responses were somewhat vague and, as a result, the mean score was disappointingly low.
- Q1:4 A full range of responses were submitted with those able to clearly define the concept, explain potential benefits and then evaluate the benefits identified, attaining full marks. Those who did not carefully read the question spent a good deal of time applying their response to Carry Light Ltd. This was not required. Weaker responses did not fully understand the concept of layering and often related it to workers in general or departments. There was also a good deal of confused analysis in relation to the impact that layering might have on those still working in the business, especially in relation to motivation and empowerment.

Q1:5 This challenging question produced some excellent responses which fully covered all four assessment objectives. Those attaining the very top marks offered an overall judgement and appreciated the fact that not all workers are the same and that they often react in a variety of ways in relation to financial incentives and management styles. The overall knowledge relating to motivation theories varied greatly. Those who had a firm grasp of how each theorist they identified viewed money as a motivator were in the minority. Many responses took far too rigid an approach and painted a 'black and white' picture in relation to those motivation theorists that saw money as a motivator and those that did not. Weaker responses often confused the various theories. A good deal of confusion was evident in relation to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory in particular.

The need to focus on the development of communication skills was clearly highlighted in a very significant percentage of the scripts. Too many responses clearly lacked any form of planning and sentence construction was weak. The inability to spell the various theorists' names was commonplace.

Q1:6 This task was generally very well done and a high proportion of candidates achieve all five marks on offer. The 'own figure rule' was applied to those responses that made a single mistake and the overall mean mark was pleasingly high.

Q1:7 The responses to this three mark question were most disappointing. The majority of candidates did not relate the exceeding of the overdraft limit with the business' inability to continue with its day to day activities. The likelihood that the business would have to cease trading was not generally understood.

Q1:8 This task was a good discriminator and produced some well-structured responses that were well applied to the cash flow forecast of the business in question. Mid-range responses often failed to evaluate and whilst they demonstrated good knowledge and analysis, they sacrificed marks by failing to cover all four assessment objectives. Cash flow problems need to be dealt with quickly and this was not always appreciated by candidates who suggested solutions such as relocation and the introduction of major structural changes to the business in question.

Q2:1 Generally these calculations were effectively undertaken. The most common error was to express the outcome as a percentage, even if the formula was correctly written.

Q2:2 A full range of responses was evident demonstrating an understanding of the concept of efficiency and explaining its importance to a mass manufacturer such as Dewhirst. A significant number of candidates failed to read the question correctly and wrote their response in relation to the, very different, Hiut Denim Company.

Q2:3 The ability to apply responses to the business in question was undertaken much more effectively by the majority of candidates. The concept of job production was well understood and matched to the circumstances facing the manufacturer. The key word, 'Assess', was not picked up by many and consequently they did not take advantage of the evaluation marks on offer.

Q2:4 Good knowledge of the concept was demonstrated by the majority of the cohort.

Q2:5 Whist the concept of the marketing mix was generally understood, the overall outcome of many responses was somewhat disappointing because of a failure to apply and analyse effectively. Too many candidates went onto 'automatic pilot' and often failed to mention the Hiut Denim Company at all. The text was full of useful information around which an argument could be built but poor examination technique was all too evident again. Planning was also an issue and the standard of written communication was particularly poor, although to some extent this may be because some candidates were working against time in order to finish the paper. Nonetheless, there were some top quality responses which were very well applied to the case in point and reached a sound, well justified conclusion.



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