GCE

Edexcel GCE

Applied Business (8721/8722)

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Summer 2006

Examiners' Report

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Summer 2006

Publications Code UA018352

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Chief Examiner's Report

This was the first June examination series for the Applied GCE Business qualification, with only the AS units available. The A2 Units will be available from January 2007, with the exception of unit 8 which will be fist examined in June 2007.

It was pleasing to see that many of the comments made in the first available examiners report back to centres following the January 2006 examination series were taken on board by the majority of the centres for this Summer examination series.

Full reports are given for units 6916, 6917, 6918, 6919, 6920, 6921 and 6922 and these should be read carefully and acted upon to help improve performance of candidates in future exam series.

Below are a few general comments which came out of the examination or moderation of work and are applicable to the appropriate units in terms of their assessment.

Examination

Listed below are some general points on examination techniques:

- Always follow the instructions on the front of the exam papers
- Always use blue or black pen or biro when writing answers. This ensures responses are clear for examiners to read. Pencil or light coloured ink such as green or red should not be used.
- The space provided for responses are carefully considered during the preparation of examination papers. Candidates should use this as a rough guide as to how much they are expected to write as a response. Inevitably the size handwriting and length of responses will vary considerably between candidates. In cases where candidates will want to write beyond the specified area they should clearly indicate where the rest of the answers are continued. For example "continued below," or "this question is continued on an additional sheet of paper." Centre are reminded that additional sheets of paper should be made available to candidates for this purpose, and should be secured to the original script with a treasury tag or string.
- Candidates are encouraged to write neatly. This helps examiners read the scripts and focus on the intended overall marking of the response. Should centres have real concerns about the legibility of an individual candidate's handwriting, the examination officer should apply on behalf of that candidate to word process their responses.

Centres may be aware that this June 6916and 6921 were marked by examiners online. This allows centres to receive detailed breakdowns of how their candidates have performed without the need to see the actual responses. Centres can compare their performance particular questions against the national average. They can also look at the examination paper, markscheme and Principal Examiner's Report.

Moderation

The minimum requirement for annotation of portfolios is laid down in the Code of Practice and many Centres exceeded this but there were still too many examples where little or no annotation was evident and moderators were left trying to identify where and how marks had been awarded. The recommendation to annotate by reference to "Mark Band" achieved and "Area" covered eg MB1a, MB2b etc is currently only being followed by around 50% of Centres but it is worth emphasising again the importance of clear annotation for the benefit of candidates and internal standardisation as well as for external moderation purposes.

Around half the centres used approved Mark Record Sheets duly signed and evidence of internal standardisation present whilst others relied on the ingenuity of the moderator to follow what had been done. Some centres still do not automatically send the highest and lowest marked portfolios and many reminders regarding this and the authenticity requirement had to be sent. Annotation was likewise a mixture of clarity and confusion and, where not present, caused problems for moderation.

Where centres complied with all aspects of the required administration procedures they are to be complimented on the high standard of presentation and clarity of assessment practice.

Although much of the portfolio work received at moderation was easily accessible there were again instances of work being inappropriately presented - sometimes tightly packed into plastic wallets that split when pages were removed; in lever-arch files or in bound folders that were difficult to open. Centre are reminded of the recommendation for candidates to submit treasury-tagged sheets that can be easily accessed and read although any suitable loosely-bound format is acceptable.

There was some confusion as to how many portfolios should be sent. This is clearly laid out in the Guidance to Centres sent out well before portfolios are required but should include the highest and lowest marked work (no zero-marked portfolios are needed) along with the asterisked work requested following submission of the Portfolio Entry Form for each of the internally assessed units.

Centres are again reminded that each of the internally assessed units is marked out of 60 and there is no need make these marks out of 100 on the Mark Record Sheet or on the "OPTEMS" forms. There were also a few instances where Centre marks on the Mark Record Sheets differed from those shown on the OPTEMS; (possibly as a result of internal moderation) but this was not always clear.

Centres are again further reminded to send the top copies of OPTEMS sheets to the address given. A small number of centres sent all copies of the OPTEMS forms to the moderator, thus delaying the process as no record of centre marks will appear on the system until the top copies reached processing.

Centres are reminded to include a declaration of authentication that the coursework submitted has been carried out without assistance, other than that which is acceptable under the scheme of assessment, signed by both the candidate and the teacher. Mark Record Sheets containing this declaration can be found on the Edexcel website.

6916 – Investigating Business
Principal Examiner's Report
June 2006

This Report is divided into three sections.

- Overview of the paper
- Comments on individual questions
- Future developments

It is hoped that centres will find information in all three sections helpful.

1. Overview of the paper

a) Relevance of the previous and specimen papers

This was the second examination paper (and the first Summer-based one) for 6916 Unit 1: Investigating People at Work. The paper was structured in a similar way to the specimen and January 2006 papers:

- three questions, each worth 30 marks
- three businesses that vary in (for example) sector, size and type
- the first 20 marks in each question testing an understanding of issues relating to each business
- the final 10 marks in each question testing candidates on businesses they have studied during the course.

The design of the paper was modified slightly as a result of experience gained from the January series. The restructuring was outlined in the January report, and worked well in the June series.

- The final double-page spread for the 'ONE business you have studied' section now contains the emboldened information box (in which candidates enter their chosen business's name and activities) at the top of both pages. The size of each information box was reduced slightly in depth, in order to free up more space for answers.
- Candidates were asked to complete both information boxes in order to gain marks, and almost universally did so. Centres are to be congratulated on training their candidates in appropriate examination technique, and it is hoped that this good practice will continue. These two pages are marked independently of each other, and therefore candidates cannot simply complete the information box on the top of the left hand page and assume that the examiner will have access to this when marking answers that have been written on the right hand page.
- This development greatly helps on-line marking but it is acknowledged that it increases slightly the time pressure faced by candidates. Centres are asked to note the 'quality versus quantity' argument expressed elsewhere in this (and the last) Report.

Centres are now aware that a candidate who uses (say) Tesco to answer the question parts on the left hand page is no longer required to use Tesco again when answering those question parts that are on the right hand page. One obvious benefit is that a poor initial choice of business can easily be remedied. However, Centres should note that each 10-mark final section for each question will normally be written in such a way that a single business can be used to answer all question parts that comprise these 10 marks, and candidates may find it beneficial staying with the same business (always assuming that they have made an appropriate choice in the first place).

All three businesses in this paper were again based on real ones, although information such as name, location and workforce-related issues, were all fictionalised.

b) Content area and AO mark distribution

The paper was written to reflect the structure and weightings shown in the specimen paper: ie,

	Content area 1.1	Content area 1.2	Content area 1.3	Content area 1.4
Marks	30	30	18	12

	AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4
Marks	36	31	14	9

Further information on this can be found in the published mark scheme, which confirms the marks awarded against each content area and each Assessment Objective (AO). Every effort will be made to follow this structure and weighting in future, subject to the following.

- Because there is the occasional overlap of topics in the four Unit sections of 6916, judgements have to be made when categorising the marks awarded.
- The mark weightings for AO2 and AO3 are 31.5 and 13.5 respectively so on occasion there will be a slight variation.

c) Interpretation of Unit content

The Unit contains content statements derived from the content for the core units in AS Applied Business. Because the Specification is not written in an NVQ occupational evidence-based format, interpretation regarding exactly what is and what is not covered by each bulleted point is necessary. This is acknowledged on the Edexcel website (www.edexcel.org.uk), for example in the 'Ask Edexcel' section.

The policy, when writing 6916 papers, is that relevant topics may be included even if not specifically named in the Unit. Centres are strongly advised to study the examiner's report, and check the Edexcel website on a regular basis for any updates.

It is hoped that Centres will again find the following guidance helpful.

- Where business terms can be used almost synonymously, the paper will attempt to include both, and/or markers will be instructed to accept the terms as interchangeable.

- The current range of textbooks acts as one source of information for judging content coverage and interpretation when the paper is being written. Relevant publishers include *Causeway Press*, *Collins*, *Heinemann*, *Hodder Arnold* and *Osborne Books*. However, Centres are advised that the Edexcel 'badge' is an indicator of general suitability only, and does not confirm that any one of these textbooks provides a 100% correct and appropriate interpretation of all content in relation to the examination.

There is further guidance on this matter in the final section of this report.

d) The number of real businesses to study

Centres are now fully aware that an important feature of this paper is one-third of the marks are devoted to questions based on the candidates' own choice of business. The advice that has been given on the 'Ask Edexcel' area of the website - as follows - is still relevant.

> "An important challenge that candidates face with this paper is in selecting an appropriate business from those they have studied, when answering the "You will need to refer to this business . . ." final section in each question (see the Sample Assessment Material examination paper for Unit 1). They will need to carry in their heads a list of the (say) five businesses studied, and select from this list the one most suitable to help them answer the 'real business' sections in each question.
>
> Some candidates will no doubt choose to use the same business throughout their answers, whereas others will decide to use a different business for each question. What is important? Clearly, does the business chosen have features that relate to the question content, and can it therefore be used to answer the questions? If the answer is 'yes', it is irrelevant whether candidates use one, two or three businesses when answering the paper. It is therefore possible - though perhaps unlikely - that the same business will enable a candidate to construct strong answers for each of the three questions."

Key tensions in this context are the quality of learning and the candidates' examination technique. In general, the more opportunity that candidates have to study the workings of real businesses, the greater the quality of learning experience, particularly given the 'applied' nature of this qualification. However, Centres must balance this against the issue of giving 'too much choice' for those candidates who find it difficult to select a business in order to answer the final 10-mark section. Centres will realise the value of exploring with candidates before the examination how to select the most appropriate business from the range studied in order to best apply their knowledge and understanding of all businesses studied.

It is important that Centres study comments made later in the 'Future developments' section of this Report, where it is indicated that candidates need to study (at least) two contrasting businesses.

2. Comments on individual questions

a) General comments

The paper was designed to assess candidates across the full GCE ability range, and it achieved this purpose. It differentiated between candidates, and all questions were answered as expected with no major misinterpretations. Although there is no direct comparison with a previous June series, it is interesting to note that the overall performance compared with January showed improvement, with an arithmetic mean mark in the region of 40 compared with January's mean mark in the low 30s.

It is acknowledged that many candidates face time pressure in getting the paper completed. As in January, completion in the 90 minutes allowed may have been an issue for some candidates (there was no real difference between the papers in terms of number of sections). Centres are aware that candidates are being tested on the quality of their answers, not on their quantity. This is an applied qualification, and those candidates who attempt to show the examiner all the generic business studies information they have learnt effectively do no more than write down 'textbook' business studies information, for which few (if any) marks will be available.

- The number of answer lines allocated to each part is deliberate, indicating in general terms the typical maximum length of answer that is thought to be necessary to achieve full marks, given the differences in writing style and size.
- Candidates do not have to write reams of generic business theory in order to gain the (40 per cent) marks available for knowledge and understanding.
- The remaining 60 per cent of the marks are for application of knowledge, selection and analysis, and evaluation, all of which require careful thought in order to be gained.

It remains extremely important that candidates develop the skills of being able to apply, analyse and evaluate what they have learnt to questions about the businesses in the paper and the real businesses they are select and use in the examination.

In this series, the ability of many candidates to undertake effective application, analysis and evaluation was again lacking. However, answering a 'different' question rather than the one set was less of a problem than in January. There remains a tendency to ignore the requirement to evaluate, which applies in particular to the last sections of questions 1 and 3, where many candidates described rather than evaluated or made judgements.

Compared with January, there was rather less evidence of a lack of content knowledge. An example is the comparison between the June question on Maslow (question 3 (b)) and the January question on the limitations of Hygiene Factors (question 3 (c)), with greater knowledge and understanding being shown on Maslow compared to that previously shown on Herzberg.

Centres are still strongly encouraged to work closely with their candidates on the following aspects of examination technique.

- Making the most effective use of the answer line space, for example by not copying out parts of the question.

- Following the requirements of the question: for example, discussing with candidates the meanings and purpose of the different action verbs such as 'State', 'Identify', 'Describe', 'Explain', 'Analyse' and 'Evaluate'.

There was again a tendency for candidates to apply 'generally' rather than focus the answer on some comparatively unique feature of (say) Boots. Only the more able could 'personalise' their answers to the last section by making specific reference to a key feature of the named business. Less well-prepared candidates attempted to apply their answers to Boots by using its name throughout their answer: as a result, they gained some of the marks. However, although such an answer does at face value apply to Boots, it could equally apply to any other major retailer, whose names could be substituted without a loss of quality, logic or accuracy. Although there is nothing 'wrong' here in that the answer will receive some marks, there is nothing that analyses or evaluates business-related issues specific to the named business.

A related issue is the tendency of nearly all candidates to identify national businesses such as Boots, Sainsbury, McDonalds and so on by name (obviously correct) but not by location. It is believed that answers will be improved if they are written with a particular branch or outlet of (say) McDonalds being identified and used to illustrate points made. This would go a long way towards ensuring the 'specific application' that is being encouraged.

b) Performance on question 1, parts (a) to (d)

Part (a). Most candidates did well on this part, with many scoring all three marks. The stronger candidates identified 'waiter/waitress' as the key issue, and usually selected hours and duties when answering part (ii). Many other candidates, however, failed to read the question with sufficient care and gave answers that related to the content in its form as an advertisement rather than its use as a Job Description.

Part (b). This was again a well-answered question by many. Some of the stronger candidates 'translated' items of information appropriately, notably information on the qualifications where examples of 'basic general education' were given. Some candidates invented their own details, which were not always relevant, particularly with reference to the 'Attitude' section on the form.

Part (c). There were many good answers that took into account the key features of interview planning. The question differentiated well between those candidates who were able to make simple statements only (eg 'write to the shortlisted people') and those who could provide additional description (eg '. . .to tell them the date and time of the interviews'). Weaker candidates did not recognise that shortlisting had taken place, again failing to read the question with sufficient care: as a result, their answers focused on issues to do with shortlisting and therefore gained no marks.

Part (d). This question was generally not well answered. Stronger candidates tended to outline the individualised nature of a letter of application as a strength and/or a weakness. Some candidates focused on the difference between letters of application and either CVs or application forms. Others, however, either based their answers on application forms rather than letters of application or assumed incorrectly that the letter of application would take the place of any interview.

c) Performance on question 1, parts (e) and (f)

This ten-mark final section was quite well answered. In part (e), however, many candidates did not follow the requirement to ignore growth when giving reasons why the named business will need to recruit staff. Some were content to make simple statements only, for example about staff leaving through retirement or as a result of changing job, failing to develop such points or to apply effectively to the business. This meant that these answers were often limited to 2 marks.

Information about open questions was provided to help answer part (f). Most wrote at least one suitable open question in (i), although some wrote examples of closed questions. Answers to (ii) varied in quality, with weaker candidates doing little more than paraphrasing the questions they had written for part (i). Stronger candidates linked their justifications to both the question and the job role, and gained full marks by doing so, although an overall mark of 4 for the whole of part (f) was more typical.

The average score for parts (a) - (d) was in the region of 10 marks, with candidates typically scoring 5 or 6 marks for parts (e) and (f). An overall mark of 15 or 16 was therefore typical for this question.

d) Performance on question 2, parts (a) to (d)

Part (a). This was not well answered. Although candidates are not expected to have in-depth knowledge of council operations, many had no idea about the likely activities provided by either IT/E-Government or Support Services. For the former there were many references to the use of computers that gained one mark but then ignored the context of the Council; for the latter there were many vague references to supporting either the public or the Council staff, again often for one mark only. Some candidates ignored the existence of the accompanying organisation chart and suggested activities that would plainly be offered by one or other of these named Services, whilst others ignored the scenario and related their answers to the hotel from question 1.

Part (b). This 'box completion' question awarded marks for both the objective and for appropriate phrasing/clarity. Most candidates unsurprisingly avoided the 'Regeneration and Economy' option, with the remaining four items being almost equally popular. There were two main reasons for weak answers: either the quality or style of language was inappropriate (for example, over-use of 'etc') or the aim was wholly unrealistic (eg 'We will stop all crime in Wellingley'). Many candidates failed to read the question, and completed all five alternatives: there was no penalty for this other than the time taken in doing so.

Part (c). As expected, the options of Training & Development and Recruitment were most popular. Many candidates comfortably obtained half marks for relatively simple statements about the specialisms, but far fewer were able to explain with sufficient clarity and focus the contribution made to the successful operation of a council. As in part (d), the role of Payroll was sometimes seen more as pay rate, ie paying employees a 'good' wage rather than paying them an accurate amount.

Part (d). Some weaker candidates believed that Jane's absence would mean a complete failure to collect revenues, and therefore would cause finance-based problems for the various specialisms. Stronger answers acknowledged the likely problems associated with her absence, and developed points by linking to the obvious functions carried out - the likely need to recruit at least a temporary replacement, train someone and ensure both the replacement and Jane are paid. Most of the 'application' marks were usually gained, though analysis was often weak.

e) Performance on question 2, parts (e) and (f)

For (e), candidates were not expected to memorise the main aim of their business. They should, however, be able to state a likely main aim and the vast majority did so in part (i), even if wording often left a lot to be desired. Part (ii) also proved easy for most, although weaker candidates simply repeated information already given in part (i). Many candidates easily gained at least one mark for the final part by making a simple comparison, with the better answers containing some clear statements about the likely aims or mission statement of the Council by referring to its 'service' activity.

There were few strong answers to part (f) because too many candidates either did not know the ownership of their selected business or gave factually inaccurate statements about it (or about the Council). As in January there was a lot of confusion between public and private sector, and between public sector and public limited company. Stronger candidates focused on aspects such as the difference in economic sector (private versus public) or factors such as size and/or control.

The average candidates scored 8 or 9 marks for parts (a) - (d), and typically 4 marks for parts (e) and (f). An overall mark of 13 was therefore typical for this question.

f) Performance on question 3, parts (a) to (d)

Part (a). This question was not well answered. Few candidates could clearly identify more than two items of legislation, and there was much speculation as to the name of certain Acts (for example, the 'Equal Opportunities Act' was a popular submission) or their content. Candidates should be able to recall with reasonable accuracy the names and key content of well-known Acts (see final section comments). Part (ii) was therefore also badly answered, with many repeating the statements already made in (i), although it was pleasing to read some good answers that were based on context details linked to the two new members of staff.

Part (b). There was often sound knowledge of the three levels quoted from Maslow's hierarchy, and good application to the work of the given business. The least well answered level was usually Self-esteem, where - although many candidates acknowledged issues such as praise by 'the boss' - many answers tried to argue the case for higher pay alone. Weaker answers simply listed features of the level - for example, 'shelter and warmth' for basic needs - rather than applying such features to the given work situation.

Part (c). This was well answered by many candidates, who easily identified two relevant problems and therefore gained two marks. Many then provided at least some good analysis: for example, the problems of recruiting and training new members of staff if existing ones leave. Analysis was, however, often limited: in the above example, there was little consideration of the possible problems of recruiting suitable staff, the assumption being that they were out there somewhere.

Part (d). Many candidates found this an easy two marks, with the most popular argument put forward as the loss of reputation and the resultant fall in sales/profits.

g) Performance on question 3, parts (e) and (f)

There were many weak answers to both these questions. Answers to (e) were often generic, ignoring the specific issues associated with the named business. There was evidence that some candidates had difficulty phrasing their answers to show how the selected business had dealt with the issue. Stronger answers focused on, for example, the need to control waste food from McDonalds and also its concerns with limiting the pollution as a result of its packaging. Although many candidates identified one or two relevant pollution-based concerns, few then went on to discuss the response of the named business.

Part (f) was a similar type of question to (e), and answers to it were again often weak. Some candidates failed to identify appropriate pressure groups, either by name (eg Greenpeace) or by stakeholder type (such as a local community). There was yet again a tendency to write about national businesses such as McDonalds, Boots and so on rather than identify and use (for example) a specific outlet, which would have been perfectly acceptable and would probably have led to many better answers. Other evidence indicating a likely weak (ie, not well-applied) answer was the over-use of the word ‘could’ (ie, 'The business could . . .'), which was often used by those candidates who did not have a clear response.

The average candidates scored 9 marks for parts (a) - (d), but only 2 marks for parts (e) and (f). An overall mark of 11 was therefore typical for this question.

3. Future developments

a) Selection and use of own businesses

One key development on the paper that will also affect some future papers took place this Summer. The instruction from the January report was as follows.

- On occasion, one type of business - for example, one in a particular field or market, or in a particular business sector (primary, secondary or tertiary; public or private sector) - may be prohibited by the question.

Question 2 instructed candidates not to use a local council when answering the final section. This appeared to work satisfactorily, the reason being to help ensure that candidates were in a position to develop an appropriate 'balance' or comparison in their answers. Centres will be aware from the January report that the effect of this instruction is that candidates should study a **minimum of two contrasting businesses** in order to answer successfully the last parts of each question.

b) Paper design

- The mark allocations for content topic areas and for assessment objectives will continue as indicated earlier in this Report. Future papers will continue to feature the occasional use of diagrams, pictures, charts and other visual stimuli in order to assist some candidates.

- In the immediate future, 6916 paper booklets will continue being 20 pages in length: each of the three questions will consist of a six-page spread (including a blank page where relevant), with the final 10-mark section taking up the last two of these pages. The opening instruction, on page 2 of the paper, for candidates to apply their answers either to businesses in the (fictionalised) location, and to businesses of their choice, will be removed in the near future in order to preserve more space for candidate answers: it is not believed to be necessary since questions are framed in such a way as to require application.

c) Unit content - additional clarification

Question 3 (a) asked candidates to '. . Identify three relevant items of legislation . .' associated with employee protection. There is some guidance in section 1.3 of the Unit, for example by reference to minimum wage rates. The marking scheme identified the following items as being of likely relevance.

- Sex Discrimination, Race Relations and Disability Discrimination Acts
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation, and Religion or Belief) Acts
- Minimum Wage Act
- Working Time Regulations (EU Working Time Directive)
- Employment Relations Act
- Employment Act (2002)
- Employment Rights Act
- Part-time Workers Regulations

There are other items of legislation that affect employee well-being. These include HASAWA and other health/safety legislation, the Equal Pay Act and the Data Protection Act.

Future questions in this area may expect some knowledge of the above areas of legislation. Questions may give candidates a choice of legislation from which to choose, or may name one (major) item only as the single focus for the question.

d) The marking of future series

- Markers will continue to follow and apply the same standard. Because markers will not be familiar with all businesses chosen by candidates, benefit of the doubt will still be given on factual matters except where is an obvious factual error that affects the quality of the answer (and therefore the marks awarded): for example, a candidate names a limited company, and follows this by a related description of unlimited liability.

- It is acknowledged that many Centre staff will use the specimen and past papers when working with candidates. However, **Centres are strongly advised** to instruct their candidates **not** to use any fictionalised business from these papers when answering the final 10-mark sections. The reason for this advice is that the relatively limited amount of detail available about these businesses will almost certainly not allow candidates to access the full marks available for the question part(s).

- It remains vitally important that candidates complete **both** information boxes at the top of both pages in the 10-mark sections.

- Marks will continue to be allocated for applying answers effectively: ie, where relevant by using more than the mere name of the business in the answer. Centres will no doubt continue working to ensure a more 'applied' approach is adopted by candidates in their answers, noticeably to the final 10-mark sections.

6917 – Investigating Business
Principal Examiner's Report
June 2006

Administration

Most centres forwarded samples on time and an accurate number of samples portfolios were provided i.e. ten portfolios with the highest and lowest grade included.

Mark sheets were not present on all samples and in some of these cases it was impossible to identify the allocation of marks across the themes/ assessment criteria. The remaining centres of those who did not complete mark sheets listed the marks per theme on the candidates' work.

Some centres did not use the required front mark sheets. Other centres produced their own but did not always include the authentication statements/ signatures.

Authentication signatures of both candidates and tutors were not always present and centres had to be chased for these.

There was little evidence of standardisation in any of the samples sent by the centres however in a number of centres only one assessor was evident.

General Comments

This is the first summer series for this unit and only the second window in which centres could enter candidates.

This unit was often leniently assessed and thus moderators sampled up to 10 portfolios for this unit.

The largest mark adjustments were made where centres had only submitted copies of presentation slides with no supporting text. This resulted in the analysis and evaluations not being evidenced. The presentation evidence is insufficient to support the awarding of the higher grade mark bands as, without supporting materials and/ or detailed witness testimonies from the presentation, it is impossible to evidence and so moderate the higher skills of analysis and evaluation. The candidates needed to provide textual assignment answers from which the presentations evolved.

A number of planned businesses were suitable for this unit, the following issues were evident in the portfolios moderated.

- Some candidates planned to set up a business in which food was sold. Where candidates choose to start a business selling, handling or delivering food they must look at all the legislation covering handing and retailing of food products and environmental health premises requirements.

- Some businesses were far too large to be used for this unit covering regional, or in some cases, national markets. It would be better for candidates if they choose a small business that did not require large amounts of capital equipment, fixtures and fittings. This would reduce the amount of resource and premises research that candidates need to undertake.

- The use of school premises as the location with the staff and students as the intended market restricts the achievement of higher grades as learners are working with an unreal market place. In the samples seen where this occurred rent, business rates and other associated costs were not identified with the candidates assuming that costs such as refurbishment, rent and rates would not need to be paid with the centre providing rooms as offices free of charge. The restricted market place and opening hours reduces the potential sales and also results in unrealistic business planning.

- Lack of realism, especially in the size of business that could be set up, sales and total wages showing in cash flows.

- Some planned businesses required large amounts of capital to start up and/ or were planned to have a large market. This approach increased the amount of research and work that the candidates had to undertake.

- Inaccuracies in the construction of cash flows and break even points.

- Follow through mistakes, i.e. differences in statements relating to the business made in answers to (a) and (c).

- As identified above the major issue with the work presented for moderation was where centres only sent presentation slides with no detailed witness statements or supporting reports.

There were some realistic, small businesses serving the local area that were used in the portfolios, examples include: window cleaning, house cleaning, wheelie bin washing, car valet services, henna tattoos, and party planning. Centres are directed to the Tutor Support materials for this unit which gives further useful examples.

Areas of the specification

(a) Some centres devised assignments that did not fully cover all aspects of this strand. The strand requires that candidates attempt to research and analyse the market. Often questionnaires were used but in some cases the sample did not reflect the target market for the product/ service in demographic terms. Once the questionnaires were completed, candidates often produced graphs of the results and described the results but did not analyse the outcomes. Work was often in mark band 1.

The other aspects of strand (a) were stakeholders, aims and legal aspects. Candidates often gave generic aims and objectives that were not SMART. Stakeholders were covered but again the answers were generic. For legal aspects, candidates usually only covered the ownership of the business. The work was often basic and the wider legal aspect related to taxation, VAT, consumer legislation and food handling/ sales were rarely covered and so work tended to be in mark band 1. Legal aspects should be wider than type of ownership and should include something on relevant legislation that will impact on the business, including references to employment and consumer protection legislation. Prices were often given but pricing policy was rarely discussed beyond simple statements of being cheaper than competitors. Some centres produced assignments briefs that did not fully cover this strand or restricted answers to mark band 1 or 2.

In strand (a) there must be some market analysis including competitor analysis. This was often present and candidates did carry out analysis of results but the outcomes were often never used in developing the business or in any business decisions. Stakeholders and aims and objectives were often covered superficially, however the better portfolios looked at the relationships between the business and the stakeholders and discussed short and long term objectives, as well as making objectives SMART.

(b) Candidates must cover human, physical and financial resources. Additionally for higher grades, candidates should cover costing, availability and importance of resources to the business. Premises were often missing or very simple statements, e.g. in the High Street, were made. Costs shown here must carry through to strand (c).

Candidates often gave theoretical answers to “quality” in strand (b). Quality statements were often “an afterthought” and not linked to other resources. Small businesses were often planning to implement TQM. Human resources and financial resources were often only briefly covered. Physical resources were often listed without reference to costing, availability and importance. Candidates often, inappropriately, produced pages of downloaded images with some descriptive detail.

(c) Candidates usually calculated cashflow and breakeven but the monitoring aspects were rarely covered. Candidates could not always explain what they were doing or how they arrived at the figures. There was little linking back to research in strand (a) or to costs and amounts, e.g. employees/ hours, of resources. Again work was often limited to mark band 1. This strand was often leniently assessed.

Despite it being clear in all mark bands, a number of candidates did not identify start up and running costs.

A twelve month cash flow is preferred although a six month one is acceptable, expenditure should be broken down and not simply shown as expenses, raw materials and wages. There were a number of inaccuracies in cash flow format (and formulae in spreadsheet) presented in portfolios in June 2006.

Figures must flow through from other financial statements and written comments. Figures in these statements must be supported elsewhere in the portfolio and not seem to be “plucked from the air”. There must be a demonstration of knowledge and understanding of financial statements and their use.

For higher grades other basic financial statements of Profit & Loss and Balance Sheet need to be given explaining how these are used to monitor business performance or how these may be used to evaluate cash flow forecasts and break evens as tools for monitoring performance.

There was little evaluation of cash flow forecast and break even calculation as a means of monitoring.

(d) There needs to be a coverage of the generic applications, e.g. spreadsheets, word processing, databases, etc. as well as business specific software. Candidates tended to refer to Sage but it is questionable whether or not small sole traders would use such an expensive piece of software when smaller, cheaper and more relevant accounting packages for small businesses are available.

The portfolios seen tended to be descriptive and had screen shots included but did not explain how these packages could be used to increase the efficiency of the businesses.

Strand (d) was often treated as an "add on" and was rarely linked to the business. There was over concentration on generic software, usually Office, with little on specialised software.

6918 - Investigating Marketing
Principal Examiner's Report
June 2006

Administration

Most of the work was submitted together with the appropriate forms – mark record sheets, "OPTEMS" etc., although not all were fully signed to indicate authenticity and this had to be requested separately. In general, marks on the work conformed to those on the OPTEMS with occasional discrepancies. Annotation of the work varied from fully indicating where criteria had been met to virtually nothing except for a final mark. Annotation is best indicated via the Mark Band achieved and the area of the spec met so, eg MB1a indicates area (a) has met Mark Band 1, rather than trying to annotate via the Assessment Objectives (AO's). Most work was received on time although there were instances where Centres received Moderators' details late. One major concern is still the inaccessibility of many of the portfolios – either tightly packed into plastic wallets, in ring binders or clipped into plastic folders. This simply made the process of extracting the work more laborious than should have been the case.

General Issues relating to the Specification

Generally, approaches varied from the largely "academic" eg candidates producing masses of theory on sampling to a more "applied" approach where the assessment requirement was more directly met in a practical way through a suitable choice of product or service. In the cases of the best work an integrated approach was apparent with the choice of product or service justified by careful research from several sources that, in turn, informed the final choice of marketing mix. Weaker approaches often tried to launch or re-launch a range of products or services and this made for real difficulties when detailed consideration of the "mix" was attempted eg it was difficult to come up with effective prices and candidates often regurgitated pricing theory without arriving at any actual prices. As with "Investigating Business" in Unit 2, the best approach was where candidates took simple products or services and came up with practical suggestions for a suitable marketing mix that incorporated a clear idea of product, price, promotion and place (distribution) ie the "4P's" linked always to the market research. Weaker work underestimated eg the costs of promotion and advertising and made assumptions about budgets that would be unsustainable in reality, hence the need for clear, simple ideas, costs and prices. In some cases, candidates were able to produce mock-ups of advertising and promotional campaigns and these added to the whole approach.

Areas of the Specification:

(a) What is needed is a clear description of the choice of product or service with reasons given for the choices made and for the marketing objectives, segmentation and target market to be clearly explained as well. Often, the nature of the product or service was not well explained and marks lost as a consequence. Where candidates had been guided to a clear, simple choice, the outcome was usually better. There is no need to make the brief too elaborate, candidates tend to become distracted by other issues eg product design and lose sight of the requirements of the specification as a result. Better work ensures a clearer linkage of the product to the marketing objectives, segmentation and the target market together with some justification for these, raising the possibility of marks in Band 3. Often, all that is needed is for the candidate to add the word “because” together with suitable reasoning to allow the higher marks to be earned.

(b) There was much evidence of suitable research as the basis for much of the unit coverage. In some cases there was too much theory, restricted sampling and little linkage when the marketing mix was discussed. In the better work, candidates had investigated a wider range of sources (including interviews with relevant people) and linked their analysis to the target market and segmentation highlighted in (a) above. Sometimes primary data was too restricted or inappropriate eg conclusions based on a sample of 5; or a product targeted at children based on a survey of adults! Stronger candidates were able to use good research findings to link analysis to the target market.

(c) Most candidates were able to discuss the appropriate “P’s” but better marks arose where these were developed through links to research findings, especially in relation to the target market identified in (a) above. Much theory was also in evidence with weaker work failing to apply this to the chosen mix. One improvement in this area would arise where the reasons and justification for links between the elements of the chosen mix are fully explained. In many cases candidates had been encouraged to use marketing tools such as the Boston Matrix, Ansoff, etc. and many of them applied this to the mix in attempt to justify what was there. In reality, the nature of the choice of product or service rendered discussion of these tools largely irrelevant since they are more commonly used in the case of larger, multi-product businesses.

(d) This was usually the weakest aspect of the work. In some cases, evaluation was done throughout but better evaluations arose where candidates effectively used “SWOT” and/or “PEST” - style approaches. In the weaker cases simple, unjustified statements and/or opinions were much in evidence. Any evaluation needs to be of the whole suggested mix rather than just of the chosen product or service as was sometimes the case.

6919 – Investigating Electronic Business
Principal Examiner's Report
June 2006

Administration

Overall, assessors within centres were consistent, in marking and achievement judgements on the assessed work, especially Theme (d). A general observation would suggest standardisation is being performed within centres, with evidence of internal verification and moderation in place. However, assessors should be guided to the depth, range and scope of examples and evaluation that should be present in the learner's work to award the higher MB3 marks.

For Theme (d) MB2/3, there should be supportive evidence of performance by assessors via witness statements and/or documentation sign-offs (e.g. signed screen/output documents) to confirm authentication of website being that of the learner.

Areas of the Specification

In general, appropriate websites were identified with an explanation of the features and purpose of the sites and how they support the business objectives as required for Theme (a), with some examples given to show the link between the website and the business objectives. However the analysis of how a business can use a web presence to meet its objectives and an evaluation (with examples) of how these businesses set objectives are met by a web presence was limited (MB3).

The businesses were selected and an appropriate list of strengths and weaknesses in there internet presences identified. However, limited or basic generic examples of the drawbacks to having an internet presence were included for most businesses regardless of sites. The recommendations for improvements in the website in relation to the business aims and objectives were simplistic and lacked the detail and evaluation required at this level for Theme (b).

In all cases, evidence of independent research into the influencing factors of designing and producing a realistic online presence were present. The key factors that influence an online presence were identified with some justification given as required for Theme (c) MB1. However, further analysis or developments relating these factors was limited as in most cases, learners primarily concentrated on legislation, with costs, maintenance, security and training expenses not fully considered for MB2, this limited the justification and consideration of the business opportunities a website could offer as required for MB3.

Most Learners (who attempted Theme d) demonstrated a good understand of the design and build processes for a chosen website to achieve MB1 and part MB2. Learners chose a range of existing or planned business, which in most cases provided a realistic business context to fulfil the requirements of Theme (d) with the use of initial plans and outlines for a website generally appropriate for the business as required to satisfy MB1/2.

Although the quality of the diagrammatic representation of the website design was adequate, they could be more professional in presentation (e. g. flow diagrams, site layouts, page sketches and links) and coupled with MB2 Theme (d), include evidence of navigation, examples of images, clips, page linkage and content outlines to support the construction of the site. For MB3 Theme (d) learners need to consider the value of the website for the described target audience and its ease of user and interface, i.e. a consideration of how the site will reflect the business, be seen by all users and its value for customers.

Based on the web sites as described/designed by learners for Theme (d) MB1 & MB2, clear supportive evidence should be included by tutors/assessors to confirm there operation. The evidence of the web sites performance (MB3) could be by witness statements and/or authentication sign-offs (e.g. signed screen/output documents) supported by tutors/assessors comments of their observations on the sites suitability, functionality and usefulness.

Centre should ensure when assessing, especially in relation to the higher mark band Theme (a) MB3, that clear evidence of analysis, of how a business can use a web presence to meet its objectives and an evaluation with examples of how these businesses set objectives are met by a web presence, is included. Theme (a) is related to the business objectives not the functionality of their sites, the use of contracting businesses and associated sites e.g. B2B, G2B B2C would assist in demonstrating variety of function and the existence of unique business objectives, as required by the theme.

For MB3 Themes (b) and (c), a more detailed analysis and consideration of issues beyond legislation is needed, on going costs of maintenance, security, training and updating should also be considered. At MB3, a clear articulation of the justification and/or consideration for the business opportunities a website offers should be evident supported by examples.

In most cases the design and operation of a website Theme (d) were well done for MB1/2, however, learners need to include evidence of navigation, examples of images, clips, page linkage and content outlines to support the construction for the higher MB2 marks. For MB3 assessors should confirm operation of the site and customer/business suitability by the inclusion of witness statements/comments, signed screen/output documents, observation and authentication statement within the portfolio evidence.

In general, from the work moderated, learners should be encouraged to explore and evaluate the influences, needs and design considerations for using a website to support a business in its achievement of objectives (Theme a and b). Learners should be encouraged to provide a working example of their designed website to achieve Theme (d) MB3 markers and learners should consider linking the site development aspects required in Theme (d), to those reviewed in Theme (c).

6920 – Investigating Customer Service
Principal Examiner's Report
June 2006

Administration

The external moderation process was deemed to be straightforward.
Overall centres forwarded samples on time and an accurate number of sample portfolios were provided i.e. ten portfolios with the highest and lowest grade included.

Statements of authentication were present in the samples moderated for this series. However these were often not signed by either the student or the assessor. Centres should ensure authentication statements are fully competed when submitting evidence for external moderation.

Assessors should be encouraged to annotate achievements of assessment objectives aid mark bands against the evidence.

General Issues related to the Specification

Centres need to ensure candidates select contrasting businesses as per unit specification; this will enable candidates to generate evidence requirements for the higher mark bands.

Centres need to encourage candidates to research fully (Primary and secondary) in order to support the evidence requirements for the higher mark bands for each strand. Analysis of primary research should be included as evidence, together with secondary research.

Witness statements need to accompany presentation slides fully detailing candidate achievement.

It is recommended that the centre encourage candidates to produce written work and then extract the presentation from the written work, this will enable candidates to submit detailed evidence towards the assessment objectives and higher mark bands.

Centres should encourage candidates to investigate the same organisation for strand b, c, and d.

Areas of the Specification

Overall it was felt the approach in delivering the unit was inconsistent in that, some centres asked candidates to produce written work and then extracted the presentation from the written work, therefore candidates were able to provide detailed evidence to meet the assessment objectives and access higher mark bands. Alternatively some centres encouraged candidates to do a Power Point presentation and only a Witness Statement were submitted as evidence. Although all the assessment criteria could feasibly be met using this approach, often the lack of detail in the presentation and the witness statements prevented candidates in accessing the higher mark bands.

Strand (a) In general candidates presented a description/explanation of internal and external customers and their needs and expectations. However, in some cases candidates only focused on one business. Centres should encourage candidates to select contrasting businesses. The needs and expectations of customers were identified however, in some cases customer needs and expectations were very similar or generic as a result of selecting similar organisations i.e. Morrison and Tesco. Evidence for how the organisations met customer needs and expectations was weak or not addressed.

(b) Strengths and weaknesses of customer service activities were implied in some portfolios. In main the evidence for this particular assessment objective was weak, as candidates focused on strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and not customer service activities. Candidates should be encouraged to elaborate on the strengths and weakness stating why they felt this was a strength or weakness for each activity and then develop this further by making suggestions for improvements for identified weaknesses.

(c) Attempts were made by candidates to describe/ explain how the chosen business maintains, monitors and improves customer service. In some cases lack of research limited candidates in generating the evidence required for this assessment objective and mark bands.

(d) Candidates identified and described UK legislation well. Application of UK legislation to the chosen business was basic however, the choice of business in some cases limited candidates in applying EU legislation. Evidence of working procedures was weak or not addressed by candidates. Useful information on EU legislation can be found on the following websites.

http://www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/topics.htm
http://www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/topics1/pdf1/bencheu.pdf
http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/emar/wtr.pdf

6921 – Investigating Promotion
Principal's Examiners Report
June 2006

This is the second series for this paper and, as expected, there has been a significant increase in the number of candidates taking the paper and also a change in the profile of these candidates. Candidates are both older and have had the benefit of a full year of study in which marketing in general will have formed an important part. There are also a significant number of candidates re-sitting. In addition there was the benefit of a previous paper and the sample paper to refer to for revision purpose. All of this has helped to ensure that most candidates have approached this June paper in a mature and thoughtful way. Many answers have been well developed and well applied to the situations given.

As in January there were two main scenarios which reflected or referred to real business situations and then three questions at the end, related to different topics and to real businesses that have been studied during the course. This is the structure that will be followed in subsequent papers and it is important that students have a range of real business situations on which to draw for the last three questions. The breakdown between the two main scenarios and the three study-related questions was 60 marks and 30 marks, and that will also remain the case in future papers.

Comments are made below on the individual questions, but there are also general points that need to be considered and which apply to most questions and tend to apply to most candidates at some point in their answering the paper.

- Some candidates did not read some of the questions carefully enough and they did not think carefully enough about what the data in each of the scenarios was actually telling them. This often meant that clear instructions about how to answer the questions were not followed.
- Many questions required analysis of the situation that was presented so that the answers could be put into the right context.
- Many candidates are still writing to the space provided on the paper and then stopping. Frequently marks are being lost simply because too little is written and there is insufficient development. This was particularly noticeable at the top end where some very good analysis and reasoning stopped before the full answer had been given. Future examination series should provide more lines, but as some hand writing is very large candidates must avail themselves of the opportunity to use additional sheets of paper if these are required.
- It is evident that some candidates are not responding to the trigger words in the question, particularly for the higher level questions where instructions to explain, assess, justify and evaluate are not being fully followed with the result that the required development marks are being lost.

The first two scenarios provided candidates with situations that were familiar to many of them. This allowed them to use their personal knowledge, as they would with many buying or selling situations. However, there was also the danger, which some candidates fell into, of focusing more on the subjective approach than on the objective approach that an A level course requires. If candidates can, and indeed should, draw upon their knowledge and understanding of real businesses which they have had experience of, this is often very beneficial if it is focused and used appropriately for answering the actual question asked.

The three final questions were well answered by most candidates and provided good details of real promotional situations. For these questions it is very important that candidates read all parts of the question before they choose which real business or promotion to use. The danger is that candidates only read the first part and choose the business or promotion on the basis of that part alone. They can then find it difficult to answer the other parts of the question using the same businesses or promotion.

Question 1

(a) This was generally well answered with a wide range of information that would be in the brochure being picked up from Figure 1. The main cause of marks being lost by the 10% who failed to pick a mark here, was not reading the question carefully enough and giving information about the fact that there was a brochure rather than what information it might contain. In part (ii) benefits were stated by most candidates but only a third went on to explain why the benefit came from being given the specific information.

(b) The answers here showed a very similar pattern to part (a) although very few candidates went on to fully develop their answers as to why the feature would be persuasive. Some candidates gave points of information rather than persuasions.

Question 2

This question allowed candidates to consider a number of possible aspects of the given situation, for example:

- That the brochure could be picked up and taken away;
- That customers had to go to the travel agent to pick up the brochure;
- That is was in the form of a brochure.

The many possible approaches allowed nearly all candidates to pick up some marks. Weaker candidates tended to list benefits and drawbacks without explaining why they came from the situation. The best candidates gave full explanations which showed a very good appreciation of the situation and how that would affect the customers and the business. Some candidates gave benefits for the business in part (a) and some candidates gave drawbacks for customers in part (b). Usually these were correct but could score no marks because that was not what was asked for.

Question 3

(a) Questions such as this one must be taken in the context in which they have been written. In this case it is clearly the £50 off that is the promotion and therefore answers needed to relate to that rather than to general forms of promotion which might include this, such as publicity, public relations, and below-the-line advertising. The majority of candidates did use the expected approach and gave a correct answer.

(b) This did differentiate candidates well. It required a good understanding of what the offer entailed as well as a consideration of arguments for and against this being successful. Weaker candidates simply put down basic benefits and occasionally drawbacks but only the best candidates went on to consider both sides and come to a reasoned conclusion. There were many points that could have been used from the stem, many of which had both positive and negative aspects. The good candidates did recognise this and balanced their evaluations well.

Question 4
(a) This was well answered but nearly all candidates although a few clearly did not know what the term ‘audio’ meant.

(b) Most candidates gave a basic reason and it is interesting to note that more candidates were able to give a basic reason than could give a correct answer to part (a). Those candidates who got this part correct and part (a) wrong would probably have benefited from going back to part (a) and re-reading it. Candidates should leave enough time to re-read their answers before handing in their papers. Only the best candidates gave developed answers for the full three marks available.

Question 5
(a) Candidates interpreted this question in two ways. The first was that the venue was actually doing the promotion for the band and the second was that playing at the venue and the tour itself was being used as the method of promotion, which is what many bands do. Although the later was not the intended approach many candidates took this approach and argued it well. Both approaches were accepted. Beyond that, this question differentiated well, with weaker candidates simply stating benefits and drawbacks, often with only one side, and the best candidates providing measured, well-balanced assessments.

(b) For part (i), nearly all candidates identified a suitable method but a third failed to add any description to this. What was required was some details of when, where, how, etc., the promotion would be run including details of what would be in the promotion itself. Some candidates gave advantages of the promotion instead, which was being covered in part (ii).

For part (ii) most candidates could state a basic reason why the chosen method would be effective and this tended to refer either directly, or by implication, to the target population. Candidates who had given a good description in part (i) had more details on which to base their answers here and tended to give fully answers. Only the best candidates could pull together all of the elements and gain full marks.

Question 6
For part (i) nearly all candidates could give one legal constraint. Where Acts of Parliament were given it was required that the Act should be relatively distinct and that the correct name should be used. Candidates who scored no marks either gave constraints that were not legal constraints or gave answers that were too vague and not explained such as ‘must not be offensive’. Some did not attempt to answer the question. These were also the main reasons, plus the selection of constraints that were too similar, which lead to the fact that only 13% of candidates could give three valid, distinct, legal constraints.

For part (ii) there were some very good answers but the majority of candidates who were able to give valid answers to part (i) lost marks here because they did not read the question carefully enough. The question was asking them why the constraints were necessary in the first place. Very many candidates gave answers to the question “Why must the band comply with the constraints?” and usually they answered that if the band did not comply it could get fined or taken to court.

(b) About half of the candidates failed to score any marks here and this was generally due to the fact that they did not know what the word ‘ethical’ meant. They therefore guessed, and guessed incorrectly. Where candidates did know the term they generally gave basic answers with little development about why that consideration should be taken into account by the band.

Question 7
This was a challenging question because it required the selection of a method of research that would allow comparison between the two methods of promotion, those used by the venues and the band’s promotion through its website. There were some well thought out answers, but a fifth of candidates failed at the first hurdle because they chose a method where valid comparison was impossible, such as putting a questionnaire on the website, which would have excluded all people who had no access and had only been affected by the venues’ promotions.

Question 8
(a) These final three questions are based on real businesses and real promotions. It is, therefore, very important that candidates can provide accurate information. For part (a) it was clear that most candidates knew about a particular advertisement that had been on the radio but some gave a BBC channel as the source. That suggests that this might have been remembered, in this case incorrectly, as far as where the advertisement was placed, rather than studied. Students should be encouraged to use their own experience and knowledge but with that should come accuracy of detail. Most candidates had no problem with this part.

(b) In part (i) very few candidates were unable to provide a ‘technique’ but it was clear from some of the answers they gave that many did not actually know what the term meant in this context. Many gave details about the content of the advertisement rather than about how it was being presented. This also affected the answers to part (ii) although candidates who had identified correct techniques in part (i) gave good explanations of how they would affect listeners.

Question 9
(a) Very few candidates failed to score here but it was disappointing that so many candidates did not give a full description of how the product was being promoted. In some cases this was caused by the fact that candidates explained why the product was being promoted rather than giving details of the promotion itself.

(b) As with part (a) most candidates were able to score at least one mark, mainly by stating a basic reason. Only just over half of the candidates then went on to explain why the way the product had been promoted would appeal to the target market. It is important that candidates take note of the number of marks for these sub-questions as that does give a good indication of the development expected.

(c) As with (a) and (b) few candidates failed to score any marks and those that did usually ignored the fact that this was about appealing to the parents. In some cases, as with nappies, it had been the parents who were the target market in part (b) so additional development was expected here rather than simply repeating what had been said there. Where this kind of product had been selected very few candidates did not give additional details. Weaker candidates simply identified elements but did not go on to explain why that would appeal to the parents, other than repeating the element itself.

Question 10

(a) This was the most challenging of the three final questions and some candidates were clearly uncertain about what 'changing image' meant. Some candidates simply wrote about a new product or promotion with no reference to the image at all. The majority of candidates did give a valid change in image, but again there was a lack of details to support this.

(b) This part was generally well answered with the promotion identified and described. Only the best candidates gave clear details of how the promotion helped to change the image, which was expected from the way in which the question had been written.

(c) Nearly all candidates could give a basic research method and most could provide details of what was being tested by the research. Only the best candidates went on to explain why the method chosen would test the effectiveness of the promotion and it is clear that many students still find this more analytical side of promotion challenging.

6922 – Investigating Enterprise
Principal Examiner's Report
June 2006

General Comments

This unit had the least entries in June 2006.

Prior to this moderation window, centres have attended INSET and have had feedback from OSCA with detailed centre/ unit reports. A number of centres sent detailed questions asking with whether or not suggestions for businesses were appropriate and they have had these questions answered in full.

The majority of the centres used Young Enterprise as a vehicle for this unit.

Photographic evidence was included in a small number of entries. This proved useful and supported the group presentation.

The centres must ensure that the product/ service of the company involves sufficient activity to enable all candidates to have an active input to enable them to move out of mark band 1.

Administration

Most centres forwarded samples on time and an accurate number of samples portfolios were provided i.e. ten portfolios with the highest and lowest grade included.

Mark sheets were not present on all samples and in some of these cases it was impossible to identify the allocation of marks across the themes/ assessment criteria. The remaining centres of those who did not complete mark sheets listed the marks per theme on the candidates' work.

Some centres did not use the required front mark sheets. Other centres produced their own but did not always include the authentication statements/ signatures.

Authentication signatures of both candidates and tutors were not always present and centres had to be chased for these.

There was little evidence of standardisation in any of the samples sent by the centres however in a number of centres only one assessor was evident.

Areas of the Specification

(a) Candidates from some centres kept detailed records of their work in diaries/ journals and these were the centres that did best on this unit. However, some centres failed to enter diaries as part of the evidence. Much of the evidence for candidate involvement comes from the diaries. Diaries also show timelines and made activities clear. They supported the other three strands. Some candidates found it difficult to discuss what they did and tended to use "we". Such evidence needed witness statements to support their diaries.

In some centres there was no diary/ journal instead there was a reflective account of what had happened. An ongoing diary is a much better method of addressing this strand. The reflective account lacked detail that would be captured in the required diary/ journal. The reports did not show the individual inputs, there was much discussion of “we did”.

In a small number of cases neither a diary/ journal or a reflective account was present. In the absence of a diary/ journal, a detailed observation statement from the assessor about each individual’s input into the company would support the evidence presented.

A major weakness in this strand was the personal evaluation, many candidates were not self critical and their evaluations were not objective. The evaluations tended to be more a commentary on the work they had undertaken. Evaluations were often one sided and lacked examples. Self evaluations were not always present

An issue with the assessment of this strand is that some companies had a very limited lifespan and limited activity. This limited the impact each individual could have on the running of the business. Centres may wish to consider smaller teams, enabling all members to have a greater input into the business. Some roles have only minor inputs. In larger groups there has to be “workers” as well as the directors.

(b) Some centres produced excellent work for this strand with clear descriptions of roles and responsibilities as well as supported evaluations of team members in these roles. Other centres failed to produce either the descriptions or the evaluations.

Evaluations need to be supported and consistent across all roles. Some candidates identified roles and responsibilities, how well they had been carried out and then the better candidates gave supported conclusions and recommendations on how the post holder could have improved his/ her performance. However, there were few fully supported evaluations seen.

(c) The witness statements for the presentation were often brief and needed much greater detail. Candidates also should include their own PowerPoint printouts, cue cards, etc. Centres must also ensure that a full copy of the group presentation is sent for moderation to enable individual input to be gauged. The centres should not restrict themselves to the one side of the exemplar witness statement proforma found in the qualification guidance and on the Edexcel website. This is only a guide and centres must ensure that they make full and clear statements about candidate input into the company and the presentation. It is suggested that the centre do not use the older 2000 version of the witness testimony proforma. This is too restrictive and does not encourage the detailed comments on performance that are required.

As many centres did not produce a group report as well as the individual ones, further witness statements on the nature of contribution to the running of the company would support the moderation process for both strands A and C. Evidence is presented by the candidates in their diaries but supporting observer comments, especially on team working, are required. Candidates tended to reproduce large amounts of the material from their diaries in this section rather than address the criterion.

(d) Generally well assessed but with some slight leniency.

This strand needs the financial outcomes of the company to be used to enable effective evaluations. This did not always happen, few gave a critical evaluation of the financial performance of the business and instead simply produced facts.

Some centres did not direct candidates to cover this strand as a separate task and relied upon descriptions of activities and the personal evaluations and the evaluations of the other team members to be the evaluation of the company.

Financial information supporting the evaluation the success of the company is needed. Candidates should include and explain their financial statements. More detail is needed to support the conclusions. Where there was a lack of detail in strand (a) this contributed to lack of supported comments in strand (d).

GCE Applied Business – Statistics

6916: Investigating People at Work

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	61	54	47	40	33
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

6917: Investigating Business

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	90	48	42	36	30	24
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

6918: Investigating Marketing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	90	48	42	36	30	24
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

6919: Investigating Electronic Business

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	50	44	38	32	27
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

6920: Investigating Customer Service

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	46	40	34	29	24
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

6921: Investigating Promotion

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	62	55	48	41	35
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

6922: Investigating Enterprise

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	48	42	36	30	25
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

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