

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

PL Business, Admin and Finance
(BA201, BA202, BA204, BA205,
BA206, BA208 & BA209) Paper 1A

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General Comments

There is a definite improvement in the standard of candidate work with much clearer evidence of candidate success in all aspects of the specification. This appears to be as a result of assessor familiarity with what is required when moving learners from Mark Band 1 through to the higher Mark Bands.

Submission of coursework by deadline dates was disappointing in some cases and this causes time in contacting Centres to establish the whereabouts of candidate work.

Annotation of candidate work was much improved with clear differentiation between the different Mark Bands. There is a continual need to remind Centres that candidate work carrying the highest and lowest mark must be included in the sample requested. Centres are also reminded that the Candidate Record Sheets must be fully completed with particular emphasis on correct and complete candidate numbers and full Centre numbers.

PL Business, Admin & Finance BA201/1A

The success of this unit hinges on a well developed business plan. Where candidates had thought about the structure of a business plan and had considered the priority areas for development against sound but simple aims and objectives and in particular the setting of prices, they did well, as this gave them the opportunity to completely judge the success of their enterprise against sold foundations. Candidates continue to struggle with clear understanding of the features of entrepreneurship. Many generic answers are not backed up by examples from their own experiences of working within a team.

PL Business, Admin & Finance BA202/1A

There was much better evidence of candidates being able to communicate effectively in writing. Half of the marks for this unit are given against communicating effectively and where candidates had chosen documents that conformed to standard document convention and met the intended purpose, they moved easily into Mark Band 3. Candidates appeared to be proof reading their work more thoroughly and this then resulted in fewer errors with good use of appropriate language. There were more candidates demonstrating sound understanding of the importance of effective administration and the implications of this on business. Their statements were backed by sound examples of the effects of poor administration. There is still room for improvement, in many cases, where candidates are planning meetings. This aspect is often muddled with no clear prioritisation of tasks or awareness of deadline dates.

PL Business, Admin & Finance BA204/1A

General Comments

On an administrative note, centre submission of coursework was still patchy in terms of meeting the deadline date with the resultant issue of having to chase centres for work.

Most centres annotated work where Mark Bands had been achieved and centres clearly differentiated between Grid A and Grid B evidence. A small number of centres failed to include the summary sheet showing marks for all candidates with the samples sent to moderators. In some cases the Candidate Record Sheets were not fully completed to clearly show marks awarded for every individual learning outcome, candidate numbers and centre number. This holds up the moderation process.

Learner Responses

Marking Grid A

Where centres used the sample assignment there is still some lack of application of the tasks to the case study. For example, some learners are disadvantaging themselves by not choosing appropriate job roles for the business, or by describing roles which are not finance and accounting jobs. Learners gave good descriptions on the use of financial information – sometimes this was implicit within the work. Calculation of the product cost budget was generally carried out well. The section on the labour budget was generally accurate but often missing totals. Learners were able to discuss manual versus electronic systems for storing financial information, but many were not specific regarding the software they would use. The invoice should have the address of the purchaser and calculations must be accurate and this was often not the case. Receipts should be clearly itemised with figures aligned. The cashbook needs to be completed fully and balanced, with brought down and carried forward figures. Profit and loss/income statements and balance sheets lost marks for incorrect layout and missing dates. Generally, all documents should be presented in a way which would enable the financial information to be useful to the business. In the financial reports learners were able to comment on specific aspects of the financial performance, but few were able to give clear justification for their recommendations.

PL Business, Admin & Finance BA205/1A

Performance in this unit continues to improve. Learners are generally basing their evidence on a small enterprise that they have taken part in and this tended to be better produced than the centres who took a more theoretical approach to the unit. Centres are generally producing 2 pieces of promotional material although a small minority of centres are producing only one.

Most candidates produced market research which involved a questionnaire. Few learners used a wide range of methods. Some learners were not adequately identifying the methods of market research that they were going to use. Most learners were able to produce charts and graphs from the data that they were able to collect. The analysis of this was rarely strong and conclusions were rarely developed.

Customer service was generally described well, although where typical customers had been described their needs and expectations had been covered generally and few learners were able to describe the needs and expectations of individual groups. Where learners had used websites to describe customer service the evidence tended to be superficial and learners who studied real world businesses produced better work.

Some learners are still not describing their own performance in handling customers in sales situations. Some learners are still reviewing their performance in sales presentations and this does not allow them to show that they have taken part in every stage of the sale.

PL Business, Admin & Finance BA206/1A

Evidence for this unit seems to be improving and the best examples came from centres that gave the learners opportunities to take part in team working activities and time to reflect on their performance. Learners were generally able to understand how organisations benefit from team working however not all work had good examples from their own experience.

Learners were able to describe the performance of the group in the team working activity but few provided critical analysis of their own performance. The benefit of having a team leader was often covered by theoretical discussion and did not include enough examples from their own experience.

Learners showed good ability to plan their team's activity. Individual roles were often planned well and more centres are starting to address prioritisation of these activities. Weaker candidates are not linking their own objectives to that of the team. Some learners are still writing this plan retrospectively and this stops the activity from being a really positive learning experience.

PL Business, Admin & Finance BA208/1A

Most centres are applying marks appropriately but still tend to be lenient in their assessment, particularly for LO2 and LO3. The depth and breadth of learner responses varied. The choice of organisation to investigate is important to ensure that learners can identify an issue, and also provide a balanced judgement of both positive and negative impacts of business practices.

Most learners could provide relevant examples of ways in which organisations can demonstrate corporate social responsibility, and this information is often available from company websites. Centres must ensure that evidence is not just cut and pasted from the internet but interpreted in the learner's own words and appropriately referenced where necessary. Many learners identified an issue and could provide realistic recommendations to achieve Mark Band 3 but some are still identifying a range of issues resulting in difficulties in making recommendations for each issue. Some learners found it difficult to establish what the issue actually was or what it had to do with corporate social responsibility.

PL Business, Admin & Finance BA209/1A

Candidates need to state clearly where they obtained their information for their chosen career. They also need to make sure that they have a short term plan for their work experience and that this ultimately relates to their long term plan for their career. This linkage will allow them to achieve the assessment focus of planning and setting goals and move more easily through the mark bands. All candidates appeared to be able to prepare and taken part in an interview to a high standard. The area that required more development is where they were asked for a range of relevant questions that they could ask at interview. The relevance of the questions could have been strengthened by showing an understanding of the job role being applied for. Candidates still find difficulty in addressing the requirements of learning outcome 4 whereby they are asked for details of performance management. Those candidates who moved through to the higher mark bands found this information during their work experience placement.

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