

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2013

PL Business, Admin & Finance
(BA201/BA202/BA204/BA205/BA206/
BA208/BA209)

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PL Business, Admin & Finance Level 2 coursework June 2013

General Comments

In many cases the standard of students work had improved. This was largely seen in centres that had been operating the programme for a number of years and had become familiar with the specifications and the order in which to manage the units.

Administration remains a problem with some centres being unaware of how to correctly complete a Candidate Record Sheet and mixing up Sections A & B. Some centres sent out work without students' numbers or in some cases, incorrect numbers. There were too many examples of work sent without marks being allocated. This delayed the moderation process.

Unit 1 – Business Enterprise

This unit was normally completed first and was generally well carried out. Although most students were able to identify some entrepreneurial characteristics, some tended to focus more on general business skills such as communication and market research, rather than characteristics. There were some good examples of entrepreneurial skills used by individuals but team examples were limited.

Most business plans were realistic but underdeveloped. Several students provided relevant information in their supporting notes but did not incorporate all of the appropriate information, such as costing or competitor analysis into their actual business plan. This lack of information hampered students when trying to reflect on the success of the business and meant that several students gave information on decisions taken without referring to how the original plan was adapted or followed.

Generally students were able to judge the success of their business. However, supporting evidence varied, some being convincing and appropriate, whilst others were limited. Most students attempted to give ideas as to what could be done differently next time, although some lacked justification – again due to lack of initial planning.

Unit 2 – Business Administration

Whilst many students identified a range of administrative roles and provided lists of duties associated with those individual roles, the detail provided in terms of what these involve was limited. Some included job roles which would not normally be considered to be “administrative”, and some described the work of different functional areas without identifying administrative job titles within those areas. In order to progress into the higher mark bands students would be advised to identify at least two roles, for example Human Resources Assistant and Finance Officer, and provide a description of the tasks they would be likely to carry out.

Students showed some understanding of the importance of effective administration in business, although some confused the importance of effective administration with good technical support. Many were unable to provide clear examples relating to individual staff members, instead focussing on the organisation as a whole.

Students produced an appropriate range of documents, including minutes, agenda and emails, as well as other documents to be used in their meetings. Most conformed to some degree to standard conventions, although to be businesslike both the agenda and minutes should have a heading showing the name of the team or project that the meeting will be about. Most minutes matched the agenda items well, although several did not show “Any Other Business”, “Date of Next Meeting” or “Members Present”. The date should also be written in full in all documents and emails should have a heading to agree with standard business convention.

The standard of communication was varied. Language and tone was appropriate in some of the work, although several provided very little evidence as minutes were incomplete or brief. Some provided quite detailed additional notes, but in order to provide a useful record of the meeting this information should have been incorporated into the official minutes, along with any other business and the date of the next meeting. Some emails were a little too informal and did not give clear information about what the meeting was to be about.

Students disadvantaged themselves when organising a meeting. Most failed to give prioritisation to tasks and to understand the importance of deadlines. Dates were often missing. There was often lack of understanding of the minutes of previous meeting.

Unit 4 – Business Finance and Accounting

Students identified a range of finance and accounting jobs and most showed an understanding of the roles performed. However, many students were not able to relate them to the scenario provided, as the roles were more appropriate for a larger organisation. Several gave the wrong definition of cashier in an accounting setting, describing instead a sales assistant. For the highest mark band the jobs must be those needed by the business chosen.

Most students described a range of financial documents used by businesses in general although some did not show a clear understanding of the uses of these documents. To achieve the highest marks students need to incorporate this into a financial report, applying their knowledge to the performance of the business chosen for the assessment.

Whilst some students provided an accurate and complete list of costs associated with the business they did not always use these to provide the cost of a finished item. Some provided unclear headings, or did not put figures into 2 decimal places as required for financial information. Some students showed limited understanding of sources of finance. In order to gain the higher mark bands students need to discuss more than one, classifying them accurately as internal or external and recommending appropriate sources of finance for their business or the business described in the assignment.

Where centres used the sample assignment provided by Pearson a good proportion of students produced the labour budget to a high standard of accuracy and completeness. However some did not include monthly totals. Some students presented a projected cash budget for centre-produced scenarios. This was good practice, as where students were using their own business enterprises these were less detailed. However care should be taken to ensure that budgets include appropriate headings and that they are appropriately totalled. Figures should be aligned and the 2 decimal place format should always be used for financial documents.

In some centres students identified computerised systems as being appropriate and gave full and clear justifications for their choice. Most students also described the specific software which they would use and clearly related their answer to their chosen business. However some students entered their own figures onto a computerised system but did not identify a system as being appropriate or give any justification for their choice. To achieve the higher mark bands students are expected to select a method, describe the specific software or manual system which they would use and relate their answer to their chosen business.

Most students produced the financial information in the cash book accurately and completely, although some were not fully itemised and some had incomplete dates and totals. Some also lacked clarity. Several of the invoices contained errors in the calculations. Incorrect order numbers and invoice numbers were used in several cases many did not include the addressee's name or address. Some receipts contained minor unnecessary errors and were not signed. Several used a made-up receipt number and incorrect customer name. For all these documents to be businesslike it would be expected to use 2 decimal places consistently with figures aligned to the right. Some students produced profit and loss statements and balance sheets for their own business enterprise. The formats used were acceptable, although some did not provide appropriate headings or dates and used only single column format. Financial columns should be headed with the £ sign, negating the need for the sign to be used within the columns. Some transferred the wrong figure from the profit and loss statement to the balance sheet.

Most students commented on specific aspects of the financial performance and gave some recommendations. However responses were varied in terms of the level of detail provided and the clarity of their justification.

Some work was incorrectly totalled. Some centres used centre-devised assessments based on the students' own business enterprise, supplemented by an additional activity to provide more detailed data for the costing and budgeting sections. However the tasks set did not always give students the opportunity to gain all of the learning outcomes. For example, students were asked to create blank invoice and receipt forms, whilst learning outcome 3(.2,.3) requires them to be completed accurately.

Unit 5 – Marketing, Sales and Customer Service in Business

Whilst all students demonstrated some understanding of the marketing mix, many students produced work that lacked detail or had been written in the past tense. This could therefore not be a 'plan'. There was an improvement in students understanding of the need to produce materials as a result of research and most related their marketing to the results of the research.

Almost all students displayed their research results in graphical format and some good analysis was seen. Less well carried out was the section on analysing typical customers in terms of specific criteria. Some students failed to attempt this area and therefore lost valuable marks.

Students carried out well the commentary on customer service in their chosen organisation although greater use could have been made of examples to justify their comments. There was a range of students' evidence to support their activity in demonstrating customer service. It was a disappointment that many students did not carry out this activity and therefore lost a significant amount of marks for this learning outcome. For those students that did carry out the activity, they sometimes disadvantaged themselves by not giving feedback at various stages of the process.

Unit 6 – Teams and Communication in Business

This unit is now generally well carried in comparison to previous series. Centres that have placed the unit in a strategic position in terms of Centre activities that are likely to involve team co-ordination score well in the activities with clear understanding of the benefits of team working displayed. Students now understand the importance of a team leader and how the team is important as a whole as it brings together a range of skills from the members involved. There was evidence of clear setting of goals with understanding of prioritisation of tasks. Communication was clearly understood if conflict was to be avoided. Less well carried out was the two way feedback to participants.

Unit 8 – Corporate Social Responsibility

Generally portfolios were assembled in the order of the specification with logical headings and clear to follow. Some centres did not send an Optems and on occasions this was confusing when dealing with consortiums. Most had a Candidate Record Sheet which was not always complete - page numbers were missing, they were not signed by the candidate to authenticate it is their own work, and marks were totalled incorrectly.

Centres annotated work but on occasions this was just the learning outcome without any reasons given on the candidates' work, making it difficult to establish the reasons why candidates had been awarded a particular mark band.

Centres tended to be lenient with the marks awarded particularly for LO2 and LO3. Assessors are rewarding their candidates for the amount of work produced rather than focusing on whether it met all the criteria to achieve a particular MB. One area that does need attention is the summative comments. In some cases centres just used the Edexcel marking criteria to highlight sections and did not offer any comments. In other cases the assessor seemed to be congratulating their candidates with praise rather than focusing on the MB and using the evidence to support their judgements.

Overall Candidate work has improved year on year as specifications are fully explored by the Centres.

Unit 9 – Careers and Employment in Business

Most students in the sample provided useful information about their chosen career, although the level of detail was varied and some did not discuss the qualifications they would need to gain in order to access their career. Personal development plans were submitted although these also lacked detail and there were gaps, for example around qualifications they would need to acquire and dates for achieving these. Most students submitted goals for work experience and attempted to make them specific and achievable. In order to progress into the highest mark bands a detailed plan is required, clearly relevant to entering a chosen career, with specific, prioritised and dated, short-term goals for their work placement. Students were able to reflect on their progress against the goals they had set and some provided good supporting evidence in the form of examples from their work experience. Where students had provided clear, specific goals before their work placement, they had a better opportunity to review effectively.

Some letters of application were well written and related well to the post applied for. Conventions were followed but with some inconsistencies in areas such as capitalisation, punctuation and layout. CVs were well presented in an appropriate format, although some did not relate to the job role applied for and others appeared incomplete, with only one referee or with work experience omitted. In order to achieve the highest mark band students would normally be expected to refer closely to a job description in order to address the specific requirements of the job, both in their letter and CV.

Most students provided a good range of general questions which could be asked in interview, although most were not specific to the requirements of a particular job. Intended answers were brief in some cases and some were not related to any particular job role. Most students provided a good range of questions which could be asked.

Students showed some understanding of statutory and contractual rights and responsibilities but in many cases this was brief. Some students were able to describe only briefly methods of performance management, giving limited descriptions of how and why they were used in the workplace.

Grade Boundaries

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

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