

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

PL Business, Admin and Finance
(BA309) Paper 01

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Introduction

This is the fifth time this externally assessed unit has been examined. All candidates were able to complete the paper in the time allowed and a range of marks were seen. It is pleasing to note that many candidates were able to achieve at least level 2 marks on the summative question 7b and were able to assess the impact upon Shell of its CSR policies. Candidates still need to be reminded to read the question and the associated stem or stimulus material. Failure to do this will limit the marks awarded, as it is unlikely the candidate will provide the context needed for higher marks. An example of this was question 6d where candidates were asked to outline CSR implications for Shell of dealing with foreign governments and agencies. Some candidates considered the implication for governments rather than for Shell.

Responses to questions

In this series, candidates attaining a grade E were expected to be able to answer, questions 2, 3, 4, 6a, 6c and 7a. They were also expected to pick up some marks on question 7b. Even with some of the other questions, candidates at this level could still expect to pick up knowledge marks. Learners around this boundary were not expected to do well on questions 1, 5, 6b, 6d and 7b. At the A*/A boundary, questions 6d, 7a and 7b allowed candidates to provide evidence of good understanding, application, analysis and evaluation.

Q1. This should have been an easy question with option A, promoting inclusion being the correct answer. Option D, paying for training **“of some workers”** proved to be a good discriminator for weaker candidates. A truly CSR organisation provides training opportunities for all its employees.

Q6a. A number of candidates failed to score marks on this question. Instead of considering what Shell does to help communities, they discussed the benefits to Shell of having CSR policies.

Q6b. This question proved difficult for a good number of candidates. The economic issues facing the company included the need to make savings in wage costs during a recession or to develop costly new sources of energy during a recession when revenues and profits are under pressure. Better answers needed to discuss economic issues linked to CSR rather than simple economic issues. The second part of the question required health and safety issues to be considered. Some candidates misread this and discussed environmental issues. Better candidates who made this mistake were able to link the environmental issue to a health and safety issue and therefore were able to score on this question.

Q6c. This was a relatively simple question where most candidates were able to score reasonable marks. One error seen was where candidates simply identified from the stimulus material what Shell were doing rather than say how this helps maintain brand loyalty.

Q6d. Again, most candidates were able to score some marks but a number failed to consider the CSR implication and simply discussed operational issues such as the need for translators when dealing with foreign governments.

Q7a. Some candidates found this to be a difficult question and focused on “senior posts” as those filled by older workers rather than workers of high authority and decision making power within the company. Most however were able to score reasonably high marks in the question by identifying that the most suitable or experienced person may not be employed due to this policy.

Q7b. As previously stated, it was pleasing to see many candidates achieving high level 1 or 2 marks on this question. Many identified a number of important points such as the motivational impact of the diversity policy. Better candidates then considered the negative side of the argument and mentioned that the best person may not always be promoted if the organisation operates a quota for senior posts to be filled from the local population. A small number of candidates simply restated the points they made in the previous question. Weaker candidates made simple comments or simply restated the data from the stimulus material without actually answering the question. For higher-level marks candidates need to consider both sides of an issue for a “discuss” or “assess” trigger word and then make some supported evaluative judgement.

Grade Boundaries

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

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