

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

PL Retail Business (RB201) Paper 01

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## **PL Retail Business RB201/01 June 2012**

### **General Comments**

This report comments on the performance of candidates in the externally assessed unit RB201.

Once again, it was clear that a number of candidates struggled to answer questions at this level and centres really do need to consider whether level one would be more appropriate. There were very clear distinctions between the more able level two learners and those that struggled to answer the questions. There were also some very good answers in this series capable of achieving high marks.

One candidate noted on their paper that they did not have a calculator to work out an average. Although the question related to the median and did not require a calculator, centres are reminded that in some question papers there may well be calculations to complete. The second bullet point under the 'Information' section on the front of the exam papers clearly states 'You may use a calculator' and centres need to ensure these are available during the exam.

### **RB201**

The examination questions were designed to cover all four Learning Outcomes (LO) and the majority of associated assessment criteria. Stronger candidates were able to apply their answers to Retail Business. Candidates did less well where they failed to grasp the basic concepts or were unable to apply these to a Retail Business context.

The topics of corporate social responsibility, partnerships, employee rights, and customer satisfaction as a performance measure appear to be challenging for many candidates. However benefits of employing staff of different age groups, monitoring staff performance, median values and staffing issues arising from the purchase of one business by another were generally well answered.

Candidates need to read the questions more thoroughly to ensure they answer the question correctly. This was especially true in the questions about the benefits of corporate social responsibility to both the community and the company. Many candidates either did not make any distinction between the two or only answered from the company perspective. In the question about employee rights to be considered when extending opening hours, several candidates answered that staff did not need to stay which did not address the question. For the more in-depth questions (worth 4, 6 or 8 marks), many candidates failed to develop their answer to access the available marks. Several candidates listed a number of points but failed to develop their answers into full sentences which could have gained them additional marks.

Candidates might benefit from work on exam techniques to recognise the different requirements from the key words in the questions. There are different expectations from 'identify, outline, discuss or explain' questions and candidates should be able to ascertain the level of answer required from the question itself.

In the first series of questions around corporate social responsibility and the potential impact a retailer can have, candidates were asked to outline or identify this from different viewpoints. There was some confusion around the question about the impact on the local community as the majority of answers were related to the impact on the company. There were also a number of candidates who answered the question on the impact on the local economy from an environmental viewpoint. In general, this section suffered because the questions were not read properly.

In the questions on the reasons for a partnership as a form of ownership, many candidates gave lists of reasons without any real development which lost some marks. Most of the correct answers were around complementary skills or being able to keep the business going if one partner was off for any reason. Some of the weaker answers stated 'so you don't have to employ anyone else'. It was quite clear that many candidates did not really understand how a partnership works as a form of business ownership.

When asked to explain why customer satisfaction can be an important measure of performance for a retail business the responses were generally not very good. Most of the answers focussed on repeat sales and customer loyalty which are the outcomes of good customer service, rather than the performance measuring aspect. A scant few identified customer satisfaction as a source of data but no one explained it as an opportunity to put things right when customer expectations are not met. Again, candidates need to read and assimilate the questions asked before embarking on the answers. The question about the benefits of employing staff in different age groups generated some excellent answers.

The most popular answer seemed to be because customers might want to talk to someone their own age, or older staff are more experienced and can help train the younger ones. Interestingly, no one identified that younger staff may be cheaper to employ as a benefit to the organisation.

In the question asking for two employee rights to be considered when planning to extend opening hours, most of the correct answers focussed on the rights to a break and the number of hours young people are allowed to work. Some answered that staff don't need to stay with the organisation which missed the point of the question.

The question on how staff performance can be measured was quite well answered. Most candidates identified key performance indicators such as sales per employee and some offered customer feedback as a good answer. The stronger answers included aspects of performance management such as appraisals. A significant number of candidates listed appraisals as 'praises' and counteracted this with some kind of sanction which indicates a

lack of understanding of appraisals although there was clearly some degree of knowledge of their existence.

When asked what is meant by a secondary location, the majority of candidates clearly did not know what this was. Some answers included 'being located on the second floor of a building' or 'it's the second shop a retailer sets up'. Very few candidates answered correctly which is a concern given that the success of retail is generally acknowledged to be down to 'location, location, location'.

Most of the candidates were able to work out the median value in a range. Some were able to carry out the ranking for one mark, but then made an error of judgement in identifying the median value which meant they could not access the second mark. A few learners tried to calculate the mean, and a few did not attempt to answer this question.

The more in-depth questions generated some very good answers in this series.

The analysis of the national sales tables of soft drinks was, in general, quite well answered. This question was a good differentiator, as more able candidates went on to recommend which drinks the company should stock in their vending machines and which should be deleted. Some candidates analysed the table and reiterated general observations without applying it to the garden centre.

There was a wide variety of responses to the question on potential staffing issues that could arise when the garden centre purchased a DIY outlet. This was a 'Discuss' question for eight marks so some development was required. A number of candidates made a list of issues without developing them any further which meant they could not access the higher marks. However, there were some very good responses from candidates who identified a range of issues and were able to give good reasons from both the individual and the company point of view. Many picked up on the lack of skills and knowledge which required staff training; a significant number identified potential stress as an issue and posed the question of what management could do to help with that issue; some identified the concept of resentment and potential sabotage which was quite sophisticated for this level of learner. A number of candidates misunderstood the question and gave answers along the lines of existing staff not being able to travel to their new job or may not want to move. Again, this seems to be indicative that some candidates do not read the questions thoroughly before attempting to answer.

## **Grade Boundaries**

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