

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

PL Retail Business (RB202, RB203,
RB204, RB205, RB206, RB207, RB208
& RB209)

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General Comments

From an administrative perspective, a small number of centres were not using the Candidate Record Sheet (CRS) and those that did were not always fully complete. In a number of instances candidate numbers and signatures to authenticate the work were omitted.

Samples all included candidate work from the highest and the lowest scores even when they were outside the sample. All work within the sample was also included.

It will also aid the moderation process if work was treasury tagged and pages numbered as where centres did not do this it made it more difficult to locate work. It would also be helpful on the marking grid and CRS to reference where evidence can be found to make it easier to agree the marks awarded.

It is important that the marks awarded for each Learning Outcome are identified which was not always the case. These marks should always be transferred to the CRS which enables the moderator to make a judgement on the accuracy of the assessment.

There was a vast reduction in the number of learners who were copying material directly from textbooks or the internet. Where these were used learners are now suitably acknowledging, referencing and interpreting the information.

Centres are reminded that it is good practice for assignment briefs to be internally verified prior to issue. This includes Edexcel Tutor Support Materials (SAMs). A number of tasks set are not fully meeting the criteria and Internal Verification may avoid such problems.

An increased number of centres were found to be marking accurately but some centres still continue to award generously across units. A common problem is where learners work is missing an element required in the marking grid which means they are often limited to mark band 1. An increasing number of portfolios submitted are accessing the higher grades and overall there was an increase in the quality of the work submitted this series. Some centres continue to perform less well and there were still a significant number of poor portfolios submitted where learners had clearly not been given enough time or guidance to complete the unit adequately. The comments given below for each unit should be used to help continue the improvements in the quality of work being submitted for moderation.

PL Retail Business RB202

Centres submitting work generally provided appropriate opportunities to allow candidates to provide evidence relevant to the requirements of the Learning Outcomes. In one centre the assignment brief used was sub divided into mini assignments and offered opportunities to access the full range of marks for most Learning Outcomes. Most candidates were able to access mark band 2 for most of the Learning Outcomes with only a few consistently achieving the top mark band. The scenarios enabled learners to make recommendations to the retailers based on considering the range of issues linked to the Learning Outcomes.

LO1.1

Most of the learners were able to identify the majority or most relevant retail channels and achievement in this Learning Objective was good. Some centres however just listed a couple of channels or the channels discussed were not relevant to the selected retailer and achieved in the bottom mark band. It is important that learners look at retailers that use a range of retail channels and that they identify each of those they use to access the higher mark band.

LO1.2

The outlines created of key start up activities and operational functions and how they differ across retail channels was often brief and occasionally in some detail. Learners tended to focus on either start up activities or functional areas without outlining both in enough detail. In addition learners need to compare how the start-up activities and functions differ within different retail channels as requested in the marking grid.

LO2.1

Learners briefly assessed the trading activities of different retail channels. Centres that had clearly used the specification had the heading from this and looked at each in detail. Other centres did not cover all from the specification and their achievement was limited. Learners should benefit from referring to the key trading activities for different retail channels in the specification under LO2 to ensure they cover enough aspects to have some detail. Many focused on one channel and they need to apply this to two different retail channels.

LO2.2

There were very mixed performances on this LO. Learners either provided a developed description of how a specified retail channels gains competitive advantage in a retail sub sector or they largely ignored this. They could improve by giving further examples of a business's competitive advantage and explaining how they help the business. They would also benefit from discussing how the competitive advantage derives from the specific channel being discussed.

LO3.1

In many cases the assessment of the 4Ps for a product was too brief. Many offered a theoretical explanation rather than an assessment of an actual marketing mix for a product. At other centres they offered a developed assessment of the 4Ps for a product. In all cases more detail was required to access the top mark. It is important that learners choose a product and assess each element of the 4Ps for the product.

LO3.2

Many discussed the importance of branding but there was a focus on logos and slogans and other aspects of branding were largely ignored. In a number of cases little was offered on the importance of branding. However there were a number of centres that really developed their responses on how branding will assist the business with a deeper understanding of brand which was not just focused on logo and slogan.

LO4.1

Most learners were able to create a brand but to develop their ideas further many would benefit from considering different ways to brand and then select the best. This means they are considering or exploring possibilities to access mark band 2 and 3. Rarely did a centre's learners choose several options for its brand and then justify which will be best for the business. Many just designed one logo and piece of packaging but this does not explore ideas.

LO4.2

The market research was normally basic. The LO asks learners to use research skills to collate and interpret information to identify target markets. The primary or secondary research should find out who their target market is and what they want but it rarely did. They did not always collate results in tables or graphs or offer interpretation to who their target market will be. Secondary research was often not focused on target markets either.

LO5.1

There was some good promotional material produced as in previous series. Too often the attempt to consider some ethical and cultural considerations was non-existent or brief. Better learners justified their promotional material and offered an explanation to how it had considered ethical and cultural issues. It would also be recommended that the learner produces a number or pieces for their promotional campaign.

LO5.2

The measures to judge effectiveness of promotions were better this series. Learners actually identified different measures and explained what they would tell them about the effectiveness of promotions. It is important that this is produced as a plan of how the effectiveness will be judged.

PL Retail Business RB203

There was a much larger submission this series compared to the previous series. Learners are required to provide evidence for 5 Learning Outcomes for the assessment of this unit. The centres submitting provided appropriate opportunities to provide evidence relevant to the requirements of the Learning Outcomes. The assignment briefs used varied with some centres using the SAM and others writing their own briefs. In both cases they offered opportunities to access the full range of marks for most Learning Outcomes. However some tasks completed were not focused enough on the LO. It was typical for candidates to be able to access mark band 2 for most of the Learning Outcomes with a few consistently achieving the bottom mark band. The scenarios would have benefitted from being based on one business at some centres.

LO1.1

Most of the learners described in some detail the role of the buyer. In some cases there was a thorough description. Learners considered changes in technology and legislation but cultural customs and ethical issues were less often covered. There is a tendency in some centres to award bullet point lists of the role in the top mark band but these normally lacked the depth to be in this mark band.

LO1.2

Most of the learners described in some detail the role of the merchandiser. In some cases there was a thorough description. Those achieving thorough were giving examples and considered the problems caused by merchandisers not fulfilling the role and benefits of them fulfilling their role. Performance on this LO was less good compared to 1.1 and merchandising was less well understood.

LO2.1

Some centres continue to provide a theoretical section which gains no credit. Where centres do produce questionnaires or secondary research these did not always focus on collating information on customers. Much of the research conducted focused on products and not customers as expected. Some centres did not show any evidence of the conducting of the questionnaires, and should have included completed questionnaires in an appendix. A second form of primary research and secondary research would be beneficial to enable more detail to be achieved. A minority of centres focused on identifying target customers and completed both primary and secondary research on this to perform well.

LO2.2

Some centres continue to get their learners to theoretically explain what a profile is whilst others get them to create a profile of an individual rather than a type of customer. Other centres only got their learners to create one profile. Learners would do best to identify a number of customer profiles for a particular business and some did well by doing this. This will help them to ensure they are keeping relevant and useful information within them. Starting to consider the products each profile may need at this stage will support them later.

LO3.1

The work produced normally described in some detail the factors to be considered in product range building. Where centres did less well they often omitted some aspects from the specification.

LO3.2

The evidence provided showed detailed analysis of how cultural customs affect retail business. They were able to show how cultural customs will affect a retailer if they started trading in these countries. However this does not focus on the Learning Objective which asks them to analyse how cultural customs affect the sourcing and buying process. Considering how buying from these countries to sell in the UK would enable the learners achievement in this learning objective to improve substantially. This was completed by some centres to great effect as they achieved well.

LO3.3

The work provided was often a brief assessment of how existing product ranges meet customer needs. Learners would benefit from considering the current product range for the retailer they add a new product to the product range in LO4.1. Looking at products they provide and showing how they meet their customer needs will help them to extract useful relevant information to be used in supporting them to select a suitable product.

LO4.1

A number of learners were able to use research skills to interpret relevant information to source a suitable product to add to a product range to meet customer needs. The majority only showed basic research skills. More detailed research in LO2.1 may help in improving this. The ideas created for new products were imaginative and it was pleasing that they did actually source a new product.

LO5.1/2

Learners were able to briefly outline the role of networks and many were able to outline the role in some detail. The description of how networking supports the sourcing and buying process was either left out or discussed in some detail.

PL Retail Business RB204

There were a number of centres submitting work for moderation of this unit. Learners are required to provide evidence for 5 Learning Outcomes for the assessment of this unit. The centres submitting provided appropriate opportunities to provide evidence relevant to the requirements of the Learning Outcomes. Although, for 4.1 the evidence provided did not always meet the criteria and meant considerable adjustment was needed for some centres. The assignment brief used was the SAM in some cases and it was this that caused the problems for some centres. Generally the briefs offered opportunities to access the full range of marks for most LO. However, some tasks completed were not focused enough on the LO. It was typical for candidates to be able to access mark band 2 for most of the LO with a few consistently achieving the bottom mark band.

LO1.1

Most learners described in some detail the roles, responsibilities and interrelationships of members of the supply chain. A number of centres had one element of the above missing; for example, they failed to look at interrelationships which limited their performance. One way to enable learners to produce thorough work was to look at more of the constituent parts of the supply chain. Some learners needed to describe how each works with other members of the supply chain.

LO1.2

In some cases learners described in some detail the difference that might appear in supply chains in different retail sub sectors. Where they did less well they focused on one sub sector. Learners would have benefited from identifying two different sub sectors and then discussing each constituent part in detail.

LO2.1

The evidence provided tended to briefly explain how the supply chain is influenced by internal factors. Whilst there was a good discussion of some internal factors, some were omitted by a number of learners. Centres seemed to do better at covering all from the specification and where they did, learners were rewarded.

LO2.2

Learners produced brief assessments of how the supply chain can be influenced by external factors. Whilst learners considered all the relevant external factors it is important they consider in more detail how they will affect the supply chain rather than just the retailer. A number did offer the required detail to access mark band 2.

LO3.1

Many learners were able to assess in detail the risk to the constituent parts of the retail supply chain. It was pleasing that learners could identify problems in the supply chain but it is important to consider the impact on the supply chain not just the retailer generically.

LO3.2

Learners were able to briefly explain and in other cases in some detail the quality systems used to ensure productivity and efficiency in the retail supply chain. There was a big improvement compared to previous series as the work was independent and attempted in their own words to explain each.

LO4.1

There was some variation with the quality of this work which ranged from generating basic to realistic and developed ideas for solutions to supply chain problems. Some centres would benefit from giving a specific problem that they can work through a manageable step by step solution.

LO4.2

The delivery schedules produced were mixed. In some cases they were detailed with resources such as staffing and timings included as well as making them more realistic than in previous series. However, some would be advised to offer a weekly schedule with precisely what comes in when as some schedules were not usable.

LO4.3

The evaluations of their schedules were often one sided looking at the strengths rather than the problems with their schedules. It is important that when evaluating they look in detail at both the strengths and weaknesses of their schedules and identify possible improvements.

PL Retail Business RB205

There were a number of centres submitting work for moderation of this unit. Learners are required to provide evidence for 4 Learning Outcomes for the assessment of this unit. The centres submitting provided appropriate opportunities for learners to provide evidence relevant to the requirements of the Learning Outcomes. The assignment brief used was the SAM or centre written and all offered opportunities to access the full range of marks for most learning outcomes. It was typical for learners to be able to access mark band 1 or 2 for most of the Learning Outcomes. The scenarios enabled learners to make recommendations to the retailer based on considering the range of issues linked to the Learning Outcomes.

LO1.1

This LO required a comparison between the key features, functions and activities of different retail outlets. The section tended to be in some detail. Learners did look at different businesses but did not always cover each in the depth required. Work on key features (size and sub sectors) were detailed, whereas functions and activities were often more brief. To improve they should have talked about what functional areas do in each business and how they interrelate and are different. Activities need looking at in more detail.

LO2.1

The evidence provided described in some detail the benefits of effective layout planning. Those that performed best related how effective layouts help support higher sales and profits and others would benefit from the same. This was often done when applying the benefits of their layout plan.

LO2.2

Learners offered a detailed description of responsibilities of different job roles and this work needs to be completed in more detail. It is important that learners avoid too many bullet points to identify the responsibilities as in some cases this limited the detail in their work.

LO3.1

A number of learners were able to produce detailed layouts and the best ones annotated justifications for the layout. To be detailed it is important that learners do not just label areas as shelves but give more specific information on what types of products are in this area and the measurements etc. The better work made links to how this maximised sales and profitability.

LO3.2

The staff schedules were varied with some being basic and others detailed. Many had aspects that made them unrealistic. For example some large businesses had one member of staff on or the same amount of staff at busy and quiet times. The working time directive was occasionally ignored with staff working in excess of 48 hours. However there was some better work where the schedules were workable and realistic.

LO3.3

The alterations were often made. However, there was not always the explanation on the circumstance or specific changes being made. For this work it was more difficult to give as much credit for the work produced. It may be best for centres to offer specific changes that the learners need to respond to.

LO 3.4

Most learners identified relevant legislation and related it to what the retailer would have to do. Unfortunately the task is about how retailers comply with the law so should be about what they do to address the legislation not what they ought to do.

LO4.3

These reviews of the team were detailed. To further improve they need to assess themselves and others in more detail and identify opportunities for improvement and achievements.

PL Retail Business RB206

A number of centres entered work for this unit. They tended to generate work in mark bands 1 and 2. The assignments provided were the SAM or centre made. But there was enough guidance to facilitate the production of some good work. The unit was focused on stock control.

LO1.1

Most learners identified in detail the main features of stock control systems. They needed to focus on the features of the stock control system and how they differ between the different stock control systems.

LO1.2

Learners offered brief or detailed links between buyers and merchandisers to stock control. It was also common for learners not to explicitly refer to merchandisers or buyers. It is important that they make the links between stock control and merchandising and buying. Giving examples of the connections would support achievement within the higher mark bands.

LO1.3

Much of the work produced briefly identified how stock control affects the supply chain. This work was often too generic. It would be better for learners to look at the constituent parts and explain in detail how they are affected by stock control systems.

LO2.1

As with other units learners identified relevant laws and described the features of this legislation. However the description was rarely linked to stock control systems. It is important that each piece of legislation makes a link to how it affects stock control. Most learners are now describing the legislations in their own words which were an improvement on the previous series where many copied and pasted from the internet.

LO2.2

The work looked at a range of issues affecting stock control. These were normally in some detail or brief. To improve they need to offer more practical examples relevant to the retailer of issues that affect stock control. Often the issues are generic to affecting retailers as opposed to their stock control system.

LO3.1

Centres often got their learners to outline and describe their choice of stock control system without generating ideas and exploring possibilities. Centres need to get their learners to start with a number of options for their stock control system; they could then consider the pros and cons for each before deciding which to use.

LO3.2

Whilst learners created a stock control system, these were basic. They need to offer some detail on how this will work. To improve they needed to plan how their stock control system will work in practice.

LO3.3

Most learners attempted to evaluate but these were often focused on strengths or lacked detail. By being one sided they were unable to achieve higher scores. Learners need to look at the strengths and weaknesses of their stock control system and then offer ways they may be able to improve their system.

PL Retail Business RB207

A number of centres entered work for this unit tended to generate work in mark bands 1 and 2. The assignments provided were the SAM or centre made. But there was enough guidance to facilitate the production of some good work. The unit was focused on customer service in Retail business. Many centres are basing the work on field trips where learners research about customer service. This in many circumstances was helpful in enhancing the learners understanding and achievement.

LO1.1

Most learners identified in detail the key principles of customer service in retail Business. Some centres still need to focus on the principles in the specification. Where they did not cover all of these their learners did less well.

LO1.2

Learners offered brief or detailed descriptions on why customer service standards are important to retail business. They again need to work through the standards in the specification explaining why each element is important but this was not always the case.

LO2.1

This task was often poorly executed as learners did not always compare customer service across named retail channels. It would be best to look at online, face to face and telephone and focus in on what customer service looks like in each channel. Often people have a marketing focus for online and this needs to focus on customer service.

LO2.2

Learners tended to describe in some detail how customer needs and expectations vary, considering the influence of circumstances, beliefs and feelings on decisions and events. Often learners ignored large aspects of the specification where it identifies different customers with differing needs.

LO2.3

Centres often got their learners to explain how businesses deliver customer service to different types of customers where 2.2 were well done, so was 2.3. But where they did not describe enough different types of customers they did not go on to how retailers meet their needs.

LO3.2

The work for this LO was generally well done with some detail in the description. They tended to describe the behaviour and how it may vary.

LO4.1

Most learners discussed briefly or in some detail the methods that retailers use to monitor and improve customer service experience. Where many centres did lose out was in not applying it to a named retailer and talking theoretically. Key is that they explain how customer service can be improved due to the findings of this monitoring.

PL Retail Business RB208

A number of centres who entered work for this tended to generate work in mark band 2. The assignments provided were the SAM or centre made. But there was enough guidance to facilitate the production of some good work. The unit was focused on selling and mark grid 1 was about theoretical knowledge whilst marking grid 2 assessed skills.

LO1.1

The description of the sales process was normally detailed. To improve this, learners need to describe in more detail what will happen at each stage giving examples to illustrate.

LO1.2

The explanation of the role of the sales person in different situations was mixed. At some centres they did not explore face to face, online and telephone as required and this limited their performance. Some sections including looking at online did not really focus on the role of the salesperson. Rather than discussing issues such as marketing the site it is important they look at the role of the salesperson in an online business.

LO1.3

Most learners discussed the importance of sales targets to a retail business. It might be useful for the learner to look at how the sales target will be useful to the shop floor staff, managers and retail business overall. It might be worth considering the problems of not having such sales targets.

LO1.4

Learners demonstrated understanding of legislation and many related to retailers. Where learners need to improve is by explaining the relevance to consumers in sales situations.

LO2.3

Learners had an awareness of open and closed questioning. It may be worth getting learners to look at exploration questions as listed in the specification. The specification asks them to evaluate the effectiveness of questioning techniques in different sales situations to inform future progress. It would be worth presenting some sales situations and then getting the learners to look at the pros and cons of each type of questioning in each situation. They then need to look at how that would help the business progress.

LO4.1

The evidence provided showed some detail on the measures retailers take to minimise the risk of fraud. More detail could be added here in describing how it would work in practice to reduce fraud.

PL Retail Business RB209

A number of centres entered work for this unit and tended to generate work in mark bands 1 and 2. The assignments provided were the SAM or centre made. But there was enough guidance to facilitate the production of some good work. The unit was focused on retail theatre. This typically involved planning a positive retail environment and product display. In many instances learners actually produced their plans or displays. Many centres are basing the work on field trips where learners research about customer service. Some worked with retailers and others their local College shop. This clearly helped many learners to perform well.

LO1.1

The learners tended to identify the roles of visual merchandisers in detail. Where learners did best they were talking specifically about visual merchandisers rather than just merchandisers.

LO1.2

The learners described the responsibilities of visual merchandisers. What was done less well was looking at different sub sectors and size retailers when looking at how responsibilities varied.

LO2.1/ 2.2

Learners explained briefly or in some detail the technologies and techniques used by visual merchandisers. When looking at technologies it is important they explain how it helps the visual merchandiser.

LO3.1

Learners tended to produce a realistic, detailed positive plan of a retail environment. Generally more detailed information like measurements and exactly what will be on each display would improve the work.

LO3.2

Most of the work presented showed a detailed, realistic product display. A significant number actually went on to produce their displays. It is important that learners design their display and that this is both realistic and detailed. If the plans could be used to replicate the display by another they are likely to achieve the top mark band.

LO3.4

Most suggested simple or occasionally developed realistic improvements to their product display. It is important that they identify the need for the improvement and explain how it will enhance the display.

Grade Boundaries

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

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