

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2013

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

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PL Retail Business Level 2 coursework June 2013

General Comments

From an administrative perspective, all centres were now using the Candidate Record Sheet (CRS) but many were not always fully complete. In a number of instances student numbers and signatures to authenticate the work were omitted. Providing this information speeds up the moderation process.

All sample work was submitted but centres need to be reminded that the student work from the highest and the lowest scores must also be submitted even when this is outside the sample listed. Pursuing this work delayed the moderation process.

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. However the vast majority of centres have responded to this request and more work was presented in such a way. It was also helpful that the vast majority of centres identified on the marking grid and CRS where evidence could be found to make it easier to agree the marks awarded. Also on the work it was useful that more centres were annotating where evidence could be found and increasingly what mark band or score the section of work was being awarded.

It is important that the marks awarded for each Learning Outcome are identified which was not always the case. Some centres continue just to identify the points awarded for LO1 but it would be more helpful in checking marks if each individual LO was identified e.g. 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3. 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 reduction in the number of candidates who were copying material directly from textbooks or the internet. Where these were used students 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 students 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 students 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.

Marking Grid A

Unit 2 – Exploring Retail Channels

Centres submitting work generally provided appropriate opportunities to allow students to provide evidence relevant to the requirements of the Learning Outcomes. The assignment briefs provided offered opportunities to access the full range of marks for most Learning Outcomes. Most students were able to access mark band 2 for most of the Learning Outcomes with increased numbers achieving the top mark band. The scenarios enabled students to make recommendations to the retailers based on considering the range of issues linked to the Learning Outcomes. The standard of work submitted this year was a significant improvement compared to last year. It was pleasing that so many were able to access the higher grades.

LO1.1

Most of the students were able to identify the majority or most relevant retail channels and achievement in this Learning Objective was good. Some centres however just discussed channels without relating to a selected retailer and achieved less well. It is important that students 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. This LO was also more accurately assessed this year.

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. Students tended to focus on either start up activities or functional areas without outlining both in enough detail. Where students did look at both they often failed to compare how the start-up activities and functions differ within different retail channels as requested in the marking grid.

LO2.1

Students assessed the trading activities of different retail channels in some detail. It was pleasing that centres clearly used the specification to provide the headings and students performed well when they looked at each in detail. Other centres did not cover all from the specification and their achievement was limited. Students 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. It was the work that focused on more than one retail channel that performed best.

LO2.2

There was improved performance on this LO. Students typically provided a developed description of how a specified retail channel gains competitive advantage in a retail sub sector. They could improve by giving further examples of how a specific retail channel gains competitive advantage and explaining how they help the retailer. The best work made a clear connection between how the specific channel generated the competitive advantage compared to other retail channels.

LO3.1

In many cases the assessment of the 4Ps for a product was too brief. As with the last series 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 marks. It is important that students choose a product and assess each element of the 4Ps for the product.

LO3.2

It was pleasing that an increasing number understood the concept of branding and most went beyond a focus on the logo as has been seen in previous series. Most focused on how branding is important to retailers. Using examples relevant to a retailer would further enhance the quality of responses to this LO.

LO4.1

Most students 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. An increasing number of centres got students to create a series of brand ideas and then they justified the most appropriate which enabled them to achieve well on this LO.

LO4.2

In previous series the market research was normally basic. The LO asks students to use research skills to collate and interpret information to identify target markets. It was pleasing that an increased number of centres got students to conduct both primary or secondary research and that this was more likely to be focused on target markets. More students also collated results in tables or graphs and offered interpretation to who their target market will be. This was a much improved LO this year.

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 students justified their promotional material and offered an explanation to how it had considered ethical and cultural issues. It would also be recommended that the student produces a number or pieces for their promotional campaign.

LO5.2

The measures to judge effectiveness of promotions were better this series. Students 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.

Unit 3 - Sourcing and Buying for Product Ranges of Retail Businesses

The standard of work submitted this year was improved compared to last year. Students 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 students to be able to access mark band 2 for most of the Learning Outcomes with a few consistently achieving the bottom mark band. Few were able to consistently achieve the top mark band and grades overall. The scenarios would have benefitted from being based on one business at some centres.

LO1.1

Most of the students described in some detail the role of the buyer. In some cases there was a thorough description. Students 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. Giving examples and detailed descriptions of the role will help.

LO1.2

Most of the students 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. There was some confusion with Visual Merchandising.

LO2.1

In previous years a theoretical section was offered for market research. This year this was not the case. Students at all centres produced questionnaires or secondary research but sometimes these did not focus on collating information on customers. This year more centres did focus on customers as expected. Some centres did not show 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.

LO2.2

In previous years centres got their students to theoretically explain what a profile is which was not seen this year. Some centres still got students to create a profile of an individual or of one type of customer. Students 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 always focus on the Learning Objective which asks them to analyse how cultural customs affect the sourcing and buying process. There were more students this year considering how cultural customs could affect buyers when sourcing products abroad which enabled them to achieve well.

LO3.3

The work provided was often a brief or detailed assessment of how existing product ranges meet customer needs. Students 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. There was a slight improvement this year because more students focused on looking at a range of existing product ranges and how they met the needs of customers.

LO4.1

A number of students 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. An increasing number used their research skills to support them with this. More detailed research in LO2.1 this year enabled many to perform well. The ideas created for new products were imaginative and it was pleasing that they did actually source a new product.

LO5.1/2

Students 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 often discussed in some detail.

Unit 4- Exploring the Retail Supply Chain

There were a number of centres submitting work for moderation of this unit. Students 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 student 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 students 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 students to produce thorough work was to look at more of the constituent parts of the supply chain. Some students needed to describe how each works with other members of the supply chain.

LO1.2

In some cases students described in some detail the difference that might appear in supply chains in different retail sub sectors. More students this series looked at more than one sub sector. Many students 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 or in some detail 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 students. Centres seemed to do better at covering all from the specification and where they did, students were rewarded.

LO2.2

Students produced brief assessments of how the supply chain can be influenced by external factors. Whilst students considered all the relevant external factors many looked at the impact on the retailer generically rather than offering detail on how they will affect the supply chain. A number did offer the required detail to access mark band 2.

LO3.1

Many students were able to assess in detail the risk to the constituent parts of the retail supply chain. It was pleasing that students 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

Students 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. The work was independently written and very few were just cutting and pasting what each meant.

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. To improve students could describe supply chain problems and then develop solutions but look at how the solution will work step by step. They also need to make sure the solutions are realistic and manageable.

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 improved this series as many looked at both strengths and weaknesses of 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.

Unit 5- Planning the Operation of Retail Outlets

There were a number of centres submitting work for moderation of this unit. Students are required to provide evidence for 4 Learning Outcomes for the assessment of this unit. The centres submitting provided appropriate opportunities for students 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 students to be able to access mark band 1 or 2 for most of the Learning Outcomes. The scenarios enabled students 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. Students 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 or ignored. 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. Some students covered this in the production of their own layout plan but often when they did this they lacked the depth to access higher marks.

LO2.2

Students offered a detailed description of responsibilities of different job roles and this work needs to be completed in more detail. It is important that students avoid too many bullet points to identify the responsibilities as in some cases this limited the detail in their work. Some students looked at functional areas rather than individual job roles and this limited their performance.

LO3.1

A number of students were able to produce detailed layouts and the best ones annotated justifications for the layout. To be detailed it is important that students 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. Improving this element will enhance performance of students considerably.

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. 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. Completing a commentary to go with their changes and a justification will enable students to achieve well. It may be helpful for centres to offer specific changes that the students need to respond to.

LO 3.4

Most students 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. It was very rare to see evidence considering compliance.

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.

Unit 6- Stock Control in Retail Businesses

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. There was enough guidance to facilitate the production of some good work. The unit was focused on stock control. A significant number of the portfolios submitted for this unit were incomplete and with a number of LOs not submitted. This unit is one that students and centres clearly find a challenge to deliver so the guidance below should support centres in effecting improvement.

LO1.1

Most students 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

Students offered brief or detailed links between buyers and merchandisers to stock control. It was also common for students 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 students to look at the constituent parts and explain in detail how they are affected by stock control systems.

LO2.1

As with other units students identified relevant laws and described the features of this legislation. However the description was rarely linked to stock control systems/ supply chain. It is important that each piece of legislation makes a link to how it affects stock control. Most students describe the legislations in their own words.

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 students to outline and describe their choice of stock control system without generating ideas and exploring possibilities. Centres need to get their students 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 students 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 students attempted to evaluate but these were often focused on strengths or lacked detail. By being one sided they were unable to achieve higher scores. Students 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.

Unit 7- Customer Service in Retail Businesses

A number of centres submitted work for this unit tended to generate work in mark band 2 and increasingly this year in mark band 3. 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 students research about customer service. This in many circumstances was helpful in enhancing the students understanding and achievement. This unit generated some of the best work produced this year and a significant number achieved the top higher grades.

LO1.1

Most students identified in detail the key principles of customer service in retail business. All centres were now focused on the principles in the specification.

LO1.2

Students offered brief, detailed and some cases thorough 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 improved compared to previous series as students compared customer service across named retail channels. It would still be useful to focus on online, face to face and telephone and to explain what customer service looks like in each channel. The focus needs to be on customer services.

LO2.2

Students 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 students ignored large aspects of the specification where it identifies different customers with differing needs.

LO2.3

Centres often got their students to explain how businesses deliver customer service to different types of customers. Many looked in detail at how the customer service helped the business meet the needs of students.

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 students discussed in some detail or thoroughly the methods that retailers use to monitor and improve the 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.

Unit 8- Selling in Retail Businesses

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. 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, students 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 students discussed the importance of sales targets to a retail business. It might be useful for the student 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

Students demonstrated understanding of legislation and many related to retailers. Where students need to improve is by explaining the relevance to consumers in sales situations. More than in previous series were able to do this.

LO2.3

Students had an awareness of open and closed questioning. It may be worth getting students 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 students 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.

Unit 9- Retail Theatre

A number of centres entered work for this unit and the work generated was variable. Some students were able to achieve very well whilst some work submitted was unfinished. The assignments provided were the SAM or centre made. 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 students actually produced their plans or displays. Many centres are basing the work on field trips where students research about customer service. Some worked with retailers and others their local College shop. This clearly helped many students to perform well.

LO1.1

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

LO1.2

The students described the responsibilities of visual merchandisers in some detail. More detail need to be offered looking at different sub sectors and size retailers when looking at how responsibilities varied.

LO2.1/ 2.2

Students explained briefly, in some detail or thoroughly 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

Students 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. There is some photographic evidence of this. It is important that students 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. Where some produced the display it is also important that they provide evidence of the design stages.

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. Some presented evidence of their improvement which was useful alongside their explanation.

Grade Boundaries

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

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