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GCSE Applied Business 5AB03 – Final Report June 2015

Controlled Assessment

As with 5AB01, it is important to recognise the differences between the earlier 'coursework' approaches to the original version of this specification and the requirements of 'controlled assessment' here.

Many candidates produced responses which it was difficult to believe had been completed within the time allowed. Whilst it is not intended that 'exam' sessions should be held, the work submitted should reflect the candidates' responses to the set activities within the time limits allowed whilst adhering to the nature of a 'medium' level of control. This was better evidenced where clear references were made to sources of information used even where a 'bibliography' as such was not required. This would remove the practice of some centres whose candidates submitted all their research files. This is not required; the Awarding Body reserves the right to request such files in cases where there are some doubts concerning validity or authenticity but there is no need to send all research materials with the submitted work.

The nature of controlled assessment makes annotation of the work an essential feature; see below:

Annotation of Work:

The importance of clear annotation cannot be stressed enough; it provides guidance both for internal and external verification and moderation of assessment decisions.

The minimum requirement as identified in the Code of Practice is that there must be an indication of where marks have been awarded against the assessment criteria ie marks for research, presentation, analysis and decision making, evaluation and methodology. These could be indicated by reference to 'criterion' ('R', 'P', 'A', 'E', 'M' and 'descriptor'/level achieved – '1', '2', or '3'. See the specification for further details). Annotation by Assessment Objective ('AO') is rather more difficult as these underpin the whole specification.

Assessors need to clearly indicate where, and to what extent, these have been by reference to the mark descriptors contained in the Unit specification. Sometimes, in the recent series, assessors indicated that more could have been done then proceeded to award the highest mark possible!

In cases where there is little (or any) annotation indicating how marks had been awarded it is often very difficult for moderators to agree the marks as given and this lack of annotation is unhelpful to any form of moderation (internal or external). In future, work without any clear annotation will be returned to Centres for assessors to complete.

Administration:

In most cases these issues were properly addressed but there were cases where the sample did not include highest and lowest or where signatures were missing from authentication statements and had to be requested separately.

Most of the work was received on time.

The Controlled Assessment Activities:

This year work moderated again ranged from the applied use of material drawn from real businesses to the more remote 'external' approach with information taken from text book or case study sources. Some assessors again indicated clearly how and where assessment criteria had been met whilst many others still provided little or no evidence in support of their decisions (see 'Annotation of Work' above).

In some cases there was still evidence that downloaded information (images, pictures, maps, graphs and in some cases whole passages of text) had been sanctioned and/or material plagiarised. Where information has been downloaded, this needs to be clarified as having been done during research time rather than during 'controlled conditions' as this is not permitted. . It must be emphasised in the strongest possible terms that the work submitted by candidates must be their own work in its entirety and if material is copied across it must be referenced and used as part of the candidate's answer and not as a substitute for the candidate's own work. . In practice, where evidence of this or of plagiarism is detected by moderators, the work will be referred to the 'Malpractice' section of the Awarding Body. The rules on plagiarism and on the conduct of controlled assessment must be made clear to candidates and centres must also ensure they are fully aware of the rules and apply them diligently.

Some centres produced excellent work. However, again concern remains about the amount of support and help given by the centres for candidates to complete the work. Many of the centres appeared to have a template to which they worked. Some had much more help – with very detailed plans. This was identified from the way they had all laid out their work. The use of side headings throughout the work indicated that this had been prescribed to them. Those that tended to follow this format did not gain the higher level marks as they were unable to further develop, why people are important, how businesses develop and external factors that can affect a business.

Again, as with 5AB01 it was evident that, in some instances, excessive 'prescription' had been given to candidates. This is questionable in its legitimacy. This was particularly so where all candidates had received very similar information and tackled the 'activities' in a prescribed manner making differentiation between candidates difficult, not to mention bringing into question the whole purpose for which controlled assessment was introduced.

Activity 1

As with 5AB01, assessors really need to consider carefully the suitability of all chosen businesses particularly the larger supermarket chains where candidates often had difficulty in focussing on particular aspects of their operations. It is advisable that candidates choose their own businesses to investigate rather than the business being chosen by the centre. There are many appropriate and accessible businesses available for students to choose – one of the businesses does not have to be Tesco or another supermarket – there are plenty of other interesting businesses available!

Some of the work seen here was still generic; could have applied to any business and lacked depth. This was always done better where the smaller business had been considered. 'Customer expectations' tended to be generic and any evaluation tended to be limited and/or of the business itself rather than of this aspect of the business.

'Recruitment' was likewise rather generalised and few candidates identified actual job roles for which their CV's might be suitable (some omitted this requirement completely)

Although most candidates had tackled the set tasks, in some instances the tasks had been re-written emphasising other aspects of business that did not match either the specification or the activity. In such a case it was impossible to agree with the marks given.

Activity 2

Some of the work was again superficial with limited analysis with little use made of the required location maps or references to these. Candidates did not always seem to have understood that many large businesses are multi-faceted and have many products and locations and thus make mention of this when tackling issues of location.

There was often still little analysis of why a particular business might choose to relocate although this is part of the set activity. On occasions, the issues had not been thought through.

Activity 3

Although this appeared to have been tackled somewhat better this time, many candidates again produced a largely generic approach that meant that the work contained very basic information and lacked focus eg on how the business might respond to external influences. Instead, any evaluation tended to be of the whole business and did not address the required tasks ie three factors that make its goods and/or services competitive; two ways in which technology is used to maintain or improve its competitiveness; how economic conditions have affected the business and two ways in which the business affects the environment and how such effects may be managed.

Reflection on Skills

As well as completing the tasks contained within the activities above, candidates are required to consider these issues as detailed in the specification. One reasonably detailed reflection may be used to cover all three tasks so long as it addresses:

- time management, personal organisation and action planning
- use of data and problem solving
- roles played in any group work undertaken
- suitability of chosen methods of presentation

See Controlled Assessment tasks for full details

Assessment Criteria:

Research:

It remains important that assessor comments support the marks given. This is particularly so where no bibliography is explicitly required. Assessors will have witnessed the candidates' research activities and a clear statement of performance will justify any mark given. Again this year this had often to be inferred from the work itself and, in other cases, it was difficult to see how a particular mark had been chosen.

Present information:

As with last year most of the work was reasonably well presented but there were still instances of muddled presentation, activities out of sequence, no headings, paragraphs and so on that detracted from the clarity of the work. However, in some cases, simple bulleted lists were presented making it merely a list of statements containing little or no analysis, application or evaluation. Just as it is for the research criterion, so it is important here for the assessor to be able to justify the marks given.

Decision making:

There was again evidence of some analysis throughout most of the work seen. Simply making comparisons, reaching simple conclusions based on findings and making judgements can constitute analysis. Also, 'QWC' is embedded here and in the subsequent criterion so marks can be given for clarity, spelling, expression, use of appropriate business terminology and so on.

Review/evaluation of activity:

The specification requires candidates to evaluate each task and/or their personal and any group involvement in each activity. In practice, one reflection could cover all three activities and be kept to a minimum to avoid repetition.

Better candidates should be further encouraged to evaluate their business findings so that evaluation is of their understanding from the investigations of the businesses rather than too focussed on the personal aspects. Again, as with 5AB01, evaluation of the task involves applying higher order skills to the task itself (i.e. the questions posed in the task) not simply the process involved. There is little business understanding being demonstrated by students trotting out a standard list of what

they did, how they did it and what they would have done differently if they had to do the task again. It must be remembered that the student is being assessed primarily on the basis of their business understanding.

Methodology:

Again, it would have been helpful to see any planning sheets or 'logs' used and to have a tutor comment to support the methodology mark given. As with 'research', an assessor statement as to how the candidate set about the tasks would help to justify any mark given.

Some candidates had again been well guided whilst the work of others lacked much evidence of 'planning' and marks were difficult to agree.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

