

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

GCSE

GCSE Business Studies (5BS03) Paper 01

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PE Report On Examination Paper 5BS03/01

General Comments

Only 213 candidates sat this examination in 2010, thus any observations about the performance of candidates will be based on evidence from a very small candidature.

Nevertheless, centres are strongly advised to take heed of the comments contained within this report and examine closely the structure of the mark scheme as a way of ensuring that their students have a clear understanding as to how subsequent exams will be structured and assessed.

The 2011 paper will have a near identical structure to this year's paper (as will all future examination papers) and it is essential that centres and their students have an understanding as to which skills and assessment objectives are being tested by examining both the command word in the question and whether or not the question makes use of context.

Comments On Individual Questions

Section A:

Section A is deliberately designed to make the paper accessible to students from all ability ranges. As a candidate progresses through section A the questions will become slightly harder, although all questions in this section are targeted at a C grade or below (with the exception of question 4d). A context is introduced from question 2 onwards (this will be common for all exam papers) and the final part of question 4 will always involve a student having to make a choice between several options and having to justify their decision.

Questions: 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a

Candidates found the objective test (multiple-choice) questions straightforward. They are designed to test raw knowledge (AO1) and they are targeted at candidates who would be expected to gain grades E and below. As a result, almost all candidates scored well in all four of these questions. Objective test questions will only ever appear in Section A.

Questions: 1b, 2b, 2di, 3bi, 3ci, 4b, 6b, 8

Questions that instruct a candidate to 'Give' or 'State' or 'Identify' will often require nothing more than a short sentence. In many cases one or two words could secure all of the marks on offer. This style of question will appear most frequently in Section A (although not exclusively so) and centres should encourage their students to take heed of the command word and the need for a brief response. A minority of students in the 2010 exam had requested extra paper to develop their answers in the hope of securing more marks. This was a fruitless exercise and in the end probably resulted in them being unable to complete the examination.

Question: 1c

The command word for this question was 'outline'. This particular question required candidates to identify a method of increasing profit and then make two points in relation to the method identified. Almost all candidates scored at least 2 marks on this question, but centres should ensure that candidates provide sufficient content for the third mark to be awarded.

One candidate wrote:

'Profits will go up by boosting sales (1 mark), this will mean more income (1 mark) so there will be more money left over when costs are taken away (1 mark).'

This is a good example as to how three marks can be scored relatively easily by ensuring that there are three strands within the answer.

Questions: 1d, 3bii, 4c, 5c, 6c

'Explain' questions will always be worth three marks and will require candidates to develop their answer. Almost all of the 'explain' questions are based around a context and if reference is made to the context in the question, then the candidate must contextualise their answer, if they want to score all three marks. Centres are strongly encouraged to get their students to practise answering these kind of questions, encouraging them to use connective words such as 'this leads to...', 'because...' . This will help candidates score marks for demonstrating links as they build their response to the question.

In their answer to **4c** one candidate wrote:

'JIT is important because it means McDonald's will always have fresh food (1 mark). This means that people will think that it is higher quality and they will never run out (1 mark). As a result they will get more customers returning and make more profits (1 mark).'

This answer scored three marks because a way in which JIT could benefit McDonald's has been identified and there are two subsequent strands of development, all expressed in a McDonald's context. Without the use of context in the answer the candidate would only have been awarded 2 marks, regardless of the number of interconnected links contained within their answer. Starting an answer with a definition will not enhance a response, since the question is being marked around the term 'explain'.

Questions: 2c, 3cii, 5a

'Describe' questions require a candidate to make three relevant points associated with what the question is asking. Thus, they are different to 'explain' questions since the points do not need to inter-connect. Again, 'describe' questions that are in context because the question refers to a particular company or industry, will require a candidate to word their answer in that context if they want to be able to score full marks. This is because any question that makes use of a context in the question root is testing AO2 (application skills).

In their answer to question 3cii one candidate wrote:

The Boston matrix is a planning tool
(1 mark). It can help businesses see
which products are out of date
(1 mark). It can also show a business
when they need to invest in new
products to replace the dogs (1 mark).

This response scored three marks since there are three relevant points that are not necessarily connected. There is no use of a specific business context, but the question does not require it since no reference is made to a specific company/scenario in the question root.

Amongst the cohort of scripts marked this year it was noted that 3cii (the Boston Matrix) and 5a (Import Protection) were questions that were very badly answered and candidates had very little understanding of what these terms/concepts meant.

Question: 4d

This is the last question on section A, and will always involve a candidate having to make a choice between alternatives. Making a choice with some simplistic explanation would place an answer into level 1 (1-2 marks). If the candidate explains their selection using one reason the candidate can move into level 2 (3-4 marks) and if two reasons are given and articulated level 3 (5-6 marks) can be accessed. To reach the top of level 3 a conclusion must be offered.

Centres are advised to scrutinise the mark scheme to see how this style of question will be assessed in future examination series.

Section B:

In section B, both questions will be based around evidence so candidates are encouraged to look for situations where the question makes use of the context provided, since an applied response will be essential to score all of the marks on offer. There will also be two questions where quality of written communication will be assessed and these questions are denoted by an asterisk next to the question number.

Questions: 5b, 6a, 7

Questions that require a candidate to 'explain what is meant by' a term will always be worth two marks. Centres are strongly advised to use the specification and make a list of all the key terms contained within qualification content pages. These are the only terms which a candidate can be asked about in the examination.

Questions 6a and 7 were not well answered with several candidates simply stating an example of a pressure group (in the case of question 6a) and in question 7 stating that a salary was a form of wage.

Question: 6d

The key word in this question was the word 'assess', since this should highlight the importance of demonstrating AO3 (analysis and evaluation) skills as a route to gain marks. This can be done by considering the size and speed of any benefits, or through stating which benefit is likely to be larger or more significant. A further route to evaluation could come from a consideration that the benefits are unlikely to be automatic and will usually involve some kind of drawback.

This particular question was done very badly and few of the candidates in this cohort made any attempt at demonstrating any evaluation within their answer at all, as a result they struggled to get out of level 1. Again centres are encouraged to get their students to practise this style of question, since a failure to evaluate and demonstrate the AO3 skill will prevent the top grades from being awarded.

Section C:

This section will always include 2 extended writing questions, the longer of which will be assessed for the quality of written communication. Again, questions will be based around a central piece of evidence, so it is highly likely that candidates will have to offer a contextualised answer to score all of the marks available.

Question: 9

The command word 'discuss' suggests that to gain access to the top level, a candidate must offer some kind of evaluative element to their answer. The wording of the question in that two benefits were required was designed to get candidates thinking about which benefit was more important as a route to possible evaluation.

This question was very badly answered, with few answers making any kind of reference to the context at all (thus scoring no AO2 marks). Other candidates totally misread the question and offered an answer that explained how Affinity could improve motivation, rather than the benefits that would accrue to Affinity by doing so.

Question:10

The final question was again heavily weighted towards an evaluative response with 6 marks allocated for the demonstration of AO3 and the rest allocated to AO2. As a result candidates who treated this question as a simple 'describe' or 'explain' simply could not score enough marks to move themselves out of level 1.

There were few good answers to this question, with approximately half of the candidates either leaving the question blank or offering a token one line response. Many candidates, if they attempted an answer simply explained what communication was in general terms and little business vocabulary was used. It was also rare to read an answer which considered the small business context of Affinity.

Grade Boundaries - June 2010

5BS03	Total	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Raw Mark	90	73	62	51	41	36	31	27	23
UMS	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20

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