

Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2014

GCSE Business Studies (5BS02)
Paper 01

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INVESTIGATING SMALL BUSINESSES

General comments

This was the fifth series of the Unit 2 controlled assessment. The familiarisation that centres are demonstrating with this unit, as noted last year, has continued as centres consolidate their understanding of controlled assessment, how it is assessed and how to enable candidates to achieve to their best ability. Performance this year – as measured by the mean mark - was slightly improved compared to last year.

If approached in the correct manner, controlled assessment is an opportunity for candidates to work independently and to demonstrate original thinking on a particular business theme. As such, it should be a fundamentally more rigorous learning activity than coursework. It should involve less work for teachers when compared to coursework. There is no opportunity for candidates to draft and re-draft their work, and to thus impose additional work on teachers. Centres must acknowledge that, given this framework, they are unlikely to get the same distribution of marks that they did under coursework, where marks were often bunched towards the higher end.

A summary of controlled assessment is as follows:

- Candidates have a choice of 5 investigation titles. New titles are published each year.
- There are 4 assessment objectives – Research, Presentation, Analysis and Evaluation.
- The investigation is to be carried out under controlled conditions. Research should be up to 6 hours under low levels of control. The write-up is 3 hours and under conditions of high control. The specification and Controlled Assessment Guide provide further detail.
- The investigation should be of a **small business**.
- All candidates should investigate a different business.

Annotation by centres was again quite good this year and this is another sign of centres coming to grips with controlled assessment. There were, however, still examples of work which contained very little or no annotation. Centres should understand that the moderator is merely agreeing (or not) their marking, rather than doing a complete remark of the sample. Good annotation clearly helps this process and enables moderators to see how marks have been arrived at. There is a recommended list of abbreviations that centres can use, but these are not compulsory. Providing the moderator can see how marks have been awarded, this is the most important thing. A series of ticks alongside candidate work is of little use. More valuable are notations as follows:

- *Source of info 1/2/3...*
- *Using Research to address the Q*
- *Simple Analysis – L2*

As also noted last year, there is no expectation or requirement that candidates will word-process their work. We understand the pressures that some centres are under in accessing ICT facilities for controlled assessment.

In terms of the choice of tasks this year, by far the most popular were Task 1 (location) and Task 4 (customer needs). As for previous series, at least one task every year – in this series Tasks 1 and 3 (financial v non-financial objectives) – are designed in such a way that they can be tackled without needing access to an actual business. The intention is that these tasks can be based around only secondary research data.

Below is a summary of the main issues arising for each of the different marking criteria:

Research

Centres and candidates should expect that different investigations will require different types of research. There is no simple numerical formula to be applied. For Task 1 – What would be the most suitable location for a small business to start-up in your local area? – candidates were often able to gather lots of Research, some of this being very innovative and original. These examples often took the form of images, photographs, customer surveys, traffic surveys, etc. For research, quantity **does not** automatically mean a high mark; better to think of quality rather than quantity.

Task 2 was much less popular, but those that did attempt this task typically conducted research by interviewing the owner of a business. The best examples then went to research how the business itself provided evidence of these enterprise skills. Some investigations included images from the business, such as team meetings to how the entrepreneur demonstrates leadership skills. Again there was plenty of scope for originality.

Note that there is no expectation that candidates will collect both primary and secondary data. The criteria descriptor makes no such requirement. The key term in the descriptor is '*selectivity*'. Has the candidate selected information which is appropriate to the investigation title? For Level 3 (7-9 marks) work must demonstrate '*good selectivity*'. For Level 4 the research must have, '*high-quality organisation ...and focus*'. These descriptors should encourage candidates to **avoid** providing unnecessary detail about the chosen business, such as its history or location. This information is not required in any depth. Similarly with photographs and maps, candidates should by all means use these, but only if they help to address the question. Some interviews this year contained questions which did not help the candidate to tackle the question.

Presentation

The quality of Presentation this year was similarly strong to previous series and the comment here echoes what was stated last year. Candidates are rewarded for presenting their findings using appropriate methods and in terms of their, '*attention to detail*'. For some investigations this may involve presenting statistical data using charts and diagrams. Where an interview has been carried out it may involve relevant quotes being used in the write up. The point is candidates must 'do something' with the information and data they collect, and this must be appropriate. For example, a pie chart showing the results of a 'yes or no' question on a survey is not appropriate. Simply including a chart is, in itself, not enough.

Organising work into appendices, and making reference to this section, is also an effective method of presenting information. Using charts, maps and photographs will not automatically push an investigation high into marks for presentation. Such techniques must support/clarify the point being made.

Analysis

Some candidates perform very well in this area, whilst others struggle. This is the nature of a higher order skill like Analysis. A slightly worrying trend this year was for centres to reward work with the annotation '*Analysis*', when in fact the information was not analysis. Key here is that candidates make use of their research information to address the particular investigation question. When candidates conduct interviews or surveys, they need to be clear on why they have asked a question. How do their questions link with the relevant concepts and theories that are integral to their investigation? The impression is that candidates feel it is vital to include some form of questionnaire, produce graphs and/or pie charts and then to talk about their findings in general terms with little or no meaningful analysis. Some candidates justify the questions asked by showing the links to the relevant concepts and theories and by including their rationale in the appendices and by referring to each question's validity in the analysis of their findings. Others, however, once again used quotes as analysis (not rewardable) or made simple or basic statements which did not merit the higher level marks sometimes given.

Evaluation

As with previous series this was the weakest strand for many candidates, although the view of the senior examination team was that performance is improving, with candidates often weighing one factor against another to arrive at a justified conclusion. It is important that the analysis of research data should inform the conclusion candidates arrive at. Using the Task 4 example referred to above, the candidate used analysis of information of a range of sources to suggest that the recruitment process of the business could easily, and cheaply, be improved.

Note that the descriptor for Levels 2-4 states that, *'... (some/feasible/detailed) suggestions for improvement are identified, where appropriate to the task'*. For some investigations this will not be 'appropriate to the task', and candidates need to be aware of this. Candidates do not need to do this for every title; it depends on which title is chosen.

What was done well?

Some centres are to be commended for their approach to this type of investigation. Moderators once again saw some excellent, original work from centres that had clearly embraced the new approach.

- **Choice** - the most success once again came from centres where candidates had been given a free choice of the titles and were not provided with a very prescriptive template to work to. That said, the most common choices were heavily based around Tasks 1 and 4. This was clearly due to the nature of the 5 tasks, rather than centres deliberately restricting choice. Note that businesses need not be unknown to candidates, but more often than not those for which some contact is already established. Many used businesses which family or friends owned, or where they worked, and this is fine.
- **Clear focus on the investigation title** – in previous series we have noted that some candidates/centres have had a tendency to answer what they feel is the question. For example, we have seen in the past comparisons of businesses not required by the question. This year these traits were less in evidence. It is good advice for teachers to keep their students focussed on the specific question. For every piece of research that they are thinking about collecting, encourage them to ask the questions, 'Does this help me answer the question? If so, how?'
- **Range of businesses** – as noted last year, it is clear that, once again, thousands of small, independent businesses have been investigated by candidates. From a candidate's perspective, these investigations are much more meaningful and valuable as learning experiences. Centres are to be commended for the opportunities they are providing for candidates to investigate real business situations.
- **Presentation and organisation of work** – as noted above, there was some excellent presentational techniques used by candidates. Lots of work was structured clearly in different sections using diagrams, charts, footnotes and appendices.

Areas where centres can improve their practice

Note – some of the information below is reproduced from last year's report as this is still pertinent for centres.

- **Avoid providing templates and structures which limit originality** – we are still seeing examples where candidates have all produced similar pieces of work based on a structure provided by the teacher. The effect of this is to limit the marks of those candidates who would have developed alternative viewpoints based on their research.
- **Practise makes perfect** - we are very aware that the skills which are being highlighted in this report as those which candidates need to demonstrate and employ, are not always straightforward for candidates. It is important for teachers to develop these skills in candidates. Centres are strongly advised to run a practice controlled assessment – but not one based on the current titles – prior to the real thing and to use this as a formative exercise to highlight to candidates what is required. This practice can be referred back to when the real task is being set.
- **Annotation of candidates' work** - appropriate annotation is a requirement of the Ofqual Code of Practice for CA. As indicated above, the annotation of the work was sometimes limited and did not provide much help to moderators in understanding how the marker had been arrived at the levels and marks. It should be remembered that the marking of work is for the benefit of the teacher and the moderator and not for the student since the work cannot be drafted and amended. It is suggested that when judgements are made and supporting reasons/consequences/ causes/ issues/factors etc. are given by the student, these are identified in some way by the marker so that it becomes clear whether high levels of analysis and evaluation are being consistently demonstrated throughout the work.
- **Presenting research/use of appendices** – there is no expectation that candidates should submit their entire research folder. The best practice is where appendices are used which contains the specific information that is referred to in the write-up. **However, please ensure that where marks have been awarded which are based on a particular piece of evidence or research that this is included in the piece which is sent to the moderator.**

Additional support

There is extensive support for teachers in relation to CA from Edexcel. This includes:

Ask the Expert – a service which allows teachers to ask questions of the senior examining team directly –

<http://edexcel--5571.custhelp.com/app/ask/session/L3NpZC9pOUI5cHJfag%3D%3D>

There are new exemplar materials and regular updates on training, including online training on the GCSE Business web site –

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/Business/Business/Pages/default.aspx>

Customised training can be arranged to deal with specific queries that centres have. –

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/Business/Business/Pages/training.aspx>

A publication designed to support students in preparing for CA has also been published by Pearson/Edexcel along with other guidance on CA which appears in the official Edexcel textbooks for the qualification –

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/Business/Business/Pages/Resources.aspx>

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