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Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2019

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Level in Business (WBS04)

Unit 4: Business in a Global Context

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This was the third time that this exam has been taken in October and again there were only a relatively small number of entrants. Nevertheless, the paper seemed to discriminate well with candidates accessing a wide range of marks, with some good, and often very good responses to the questions set.

The standard of answers was on the whole, slightly higher than the previous October exam. Having said that, there were also some very weak responses that showed little understanding of, or even familiarity with, the specification content, this was particularly noticeable on questions 3 and 4.

The main reasons for some otherwise able students underachieving were the usual ones of not heeding command words and not reading the questions carefully enough. Command words are still being ignored by a sizeable number. Instructions to 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' were not followed by some candidates. Some of the students missed out on marks because they did not answer the question that was set. Some students missed out several whole questions.

It is worth reminding future students of the need to apply proper context to all responses. Repeating generic or stock answers or just copying the text out will not access the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 1a

This was reasonably well answered with many candidates gaining both marks. When this was not the case it was due to missing one half of the definition, often the distinction that primary research involves first-hand or original research.

Question 1b

Many candidates failed to reach the second mark because they failed to develop the definition to include the temporary or one-off nature of a joint venture and just gave a generic definition of inorganic growth.

Question 2

Some good answers here and most were able to offer two reasons for tariffs. As in previous exams, it was lack of application that held back many from reaching full marks. Some offered protecting domestic industries and protecting infant industries as the two reasons but failed to differentiate between them sufficiently in their analysis.

Question 3

This question caused problems for a significant number of candidates who surprisingly had no idea what was meant by push and pull factors despite this being a prominent part of the specification. Those who did know, mainly used saturated home markets and the attraction of a rapidly growing economy. As before, there are still too many candidates who treat this like a 6-mark questions and fail to add a further analytical point to their reasons.

Question 4

Most candidates scored well on this question, but this owed more to the nature of the levels-based mark scheme rather than true merit. The nature of these questions means that very weak answers that have some brief context and a hint of balance are placed in L4. Some centres may see a real change in the grades their students are awarded when the new levels are applied to this paper in 2020.

A few candidates misunderstood the question and assumed that IKEA was selling the rickshaws or evaluated the merits of solar power against internal combustion engines.

Question 5

There were some good responses here, with solid understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of appealing to local preferences. There were plenty of opportunities for application and it was pleasing to see some candidates using their own knowledge and not just relying on the extract.

SECTION B

Both case studies proved to be accessible and gave students the opportunity to apply relevant business theories. Students should always reinforce their argument with examples and avoid generic assertions. The questions were balanced in outcome but question 7 on global niche markets was probably slightly better answered for the students that did not do so well in the 20-mark questions, it was usually because they had simply copied out or re-written the evidence, with little or no attempt at analysis or evaluation. Meaningful conclusions were rare indeed, simply rewriting previously made points adds nothing to the answer.

Question 6

The majority of students could explain the differences between organic and inorganic growth with a good understanding of their relative merits and drawbacks. A high proportion of candidates got into L4 with balance and some application, with many of the responses reaching mid-level. Weaker responses relied on using chunks from the extract with little connection to their arguments. Evaluation was often weak, and assertion based such as 'it's slower' or 'it's more expensive' without developing the reasons behind such statements.

Question 7

Again, there were some very good responses, with solid understanding of the pros and cons of operating in a global niche market. While most candidates concentrated on the extract some did bring in other examples from their own knowledge which helped their progression through to the higher levels. As with question 6 the weaker response relied on unsupported assertions or lists of pros and cons. The key to doing well in these longer questions is to develop the arguments and support them with evidence.

There was very little evidence to suggest that candidates did not have enough time to complete the paper.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Do read the question carefully and answer the question that is set
- Do watch out for command words such as Assess or Evaluate
- Do use examples to illustrate your argument
- Do use the language of the subject and avoid generalities
- Do watch your timing and do not spend too long on one question
- Do write concisely
- Do add a meaningful conclusion to the longer questions and not just repeat yourself

