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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International A Level  
In Business (WBS11)  
Unit 1 Marketing and people

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## **Introduction:**

The paper discriminated well, with candidates accessing a very wide range of marks. Many students appeared well-prepared for the exam and provided some excellent answers showing good knowledge and understanding of business concepts.

However, in contract there were some students who were clearly not prepared for the exam and lacked understanding of some topics. Many students failed to show any understanding of opportunity costs which is a fundamental business concept that examines potential benefits that are lost when a business makes a decision.

The main reasons for students underachieving were the usual ones of not reading the question carefully enough or not adhering to the command words. Question 2c was particularly poorly answered- it required students to explain the advantages of face-to-face interviews. A large number of candidates provided generic responses about the advantages of market research and therefore did not specifically answer the question and hence scored few or no marks.

Whilst there has been a definite improvement over the last few years, there are still students who are failing to provide counterbalance to the discuss and assess questions.

It is also worth reminding students once again of the need to read the case studies carefully and use the evidence provided to apply context to their responses. Providing generic responses will not achieve the higher-level marks of the mark scheme.

## **Report on individual questions**

Question 1a: The majority of students gained at least one mark for defining 'dynamic market' Most students recognised it refers to a changing market and were awarded a second mark for supporting this with showing an understanding that the change was rapid.

Question 1b: It was evident that many candidates were able to recall the formula for income elasticity of demand (YED). But a high number of students failed to correctly calculate the percentage change in demand, when provided with the YED value and the percentage change in income. However, it is worth reminding centres once again that marks are given for showing workings and marks were awarded for a suitable formula and applying the numerical data to the formula.

Question 1c: Many candidates did not show clear understanding of opportunity cost. This is a fundamental business concept which should be taught along-side many topics when discussing the choices businesses make. Many students wrote about the risks the entrepreneur took or the financial costs to a business, instead of the potential benefits sacrificed. Many students were able to recall a definition to gain 1-2 knowledge marks.

Question 1d: Many students showed good understanding of the difficulties of expanding a business and some used the extracts well to contextualise their answers. However, it was disappointing that some students did not provide balance to their answer to examine why expansion may not be so difficult for the parcel business. given their current success and the rapid growth of the parcel market.

Question 1e: It was pleasing to see that although the topic of piecework had not been examined previously in the current specification, candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the topic. Many students attempted to provide counterbalance though many points were underdeveloped and not well contextualised.

Question 2a: This definition question was generally well answered. Many students showed an understand of the term 'product portfolio' and gained the full two marks.

Question 2b: Some students scored full marks but fewer than expected. The overall marks were disappointing for this calculation. Candidates were required to calculate the increase in revenue between two years. Many candidates omitted the currency/billions from their final answers and surprisingly many calculated a percentage change between the two year which was not required. Candidates must read the questions very carefully. Again, many students were awarded marks for the workings and formula even if the final answer was incorrect.

Question 2c: This question was generally poorly answered. As mentioned in the introduction the question required candidates to explain the advantages of face-to-face interviews. Instead students provided generic responses about market research which did not specifically answer the question and hence scored no marks.

Question 2d: Many candidates showed good understanding of the concept of differentiation. The reasons given were wide ranging and some students used the extracts well to provide context to their points of analysis. However, as with 1d, many students were not providing developed points of counterbalance. Just stating 'differentiation is expensive' is insufficient to reach level 3 of the mark scheme. Points must be developed to show logical chains of reasoning in the context of the specific business in the extracts.

Question 2e: This question was reasonably well answered. Many students showed good understanding of outsourcing and used the extracts well to support their points. Unfortunately, yet again, too many responses did not attempt a counterbalance or simply provided a one-line evaluative point which was not sufficiently developed to explain the consequence to the business.

Question 3: This question proved accessible to the majority of candidates who were able to show reasonable understanding of autocratic leadership. However, too many wrote a generic answer which simply listed the advantages and disadvantages of autocratic leadership without reference to Elon Musk and his many businesses. Others confused autocratic leadership with democratic or laissez faire leadership. It remains the norm that few candidates provide a

recommendation to their answers. Students should practise writing conclusion which do not simply rely on repeating their points but demonstrate the ability to weigh up competing arguments to propose a solution or recommendation.

## **Summary**

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

- The biggest reason candidates underachieved on this paper was because candidates failed to answer the specific question asked. It is imperative that candidates read the questions carefully and re-read them a second time. Students should identify the specific topic being examined and not provide generic responses that are not addressing the question posed.
- This advice is given each series but unfortunately not always adhered to; many students are still failing to provide developed counterbalance in their answers. For discuss, analyse and evaluation questions students must always provide a balanced assessment. Failing to provide a counterbalance means it is extremely unlikely the candidate can reach the top level in the mark scheme. The counterbalance should be as equally developed as the points of analysis.
- Context is crucial to gain the top marks. The extracts provide evidence that students can utilise to support their answers. However, candidates should not simply rewrite large sections of the extracts. The evidence should be used to support the knowledge and development of the points.

