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Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2025

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

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Introduction:

Many candidates appeared well-prepared for the exam and provided good responses to demonstrate clear understanding of business concepts. The paper discriminated well, with candidates accessing a very wide range of marks. Those achieving the higher marks used the extracts well to contextualise their responses and provided well developed chains of reasoning to fully explain their points.

The main reason for candidates underachieving in this series was the fact they did not always read the questions carefully enough. Question 2e was a prime example of this. They were asked to assess if the use of flexible working would improve employee performance. Whilst candidates clearly understood the merits and problems of flexible working, they failed to assess its impact on employee performance. A large number of students wrote about how it would be of benefit to the business with no links to employee performance. Due to this they failed to answer the question set.

There are still candidates who are failing to provide counterbalance to the discuss and assess questions. Due to this they are unable to fulfilling all off the descriptors in the higher levels of the mark scheme. There is also a distinct lack of supported recommendations provided on the assess and evaluation questions which limits candidates from reaching the top of level 4 in the mark scheme.

Report on individual questions

Question 1a: The majority of candidates demonstrated some knowledge of a 'mass market' and gained at least one mark. Most candidates recognised it refers to a large market with mass appeal. Some referred to a market with low prices and lots of competition which is not necessarily the case.

Question 1b: This calculation question was well answered with many students scoring full marks. However, there were candidates who failed to show the currency sign and lost a mark. Centres should remind students to always add the currency or units to any calculation answer. There was an improvement this series on the number of candidates showing their workings which is a positive note, as they can be awarded marks even if the final answer is incorrect.

Question 1c: This question was well answered by some candidates who identified two demand factors, provided context to support the knowledge and developed each point to show the impact on levels of demand. This logical structure is ideal for any 6-mark explain question.

However, some students failed to identify a demand factor, and simply repeated points made in the extracts, whilst others explained supply factors. Some candidates referred to price as a factor, which scored no marks as they were specifically told in the question to identify demand factors other than price. This is another example of candidates not reading the question thoroughly.

Question 1d: Although this topic has been examined before in the current specification, some candidates struggled with this question. Whilst there appears to be good understanding of the term market share, many candidates do not understand its importance in a competitive market. Whilst some students provided good points of analysis, the counterbalance was generally poor with vague responses and little development or context.

Question 1e: It was encouraging to see that candidates appeared to have good understanding of ethical sourcing. Many responses were well contextualised and most attempted a counterbalance. However, some candidates still only provide a one-line or two-line answer as counterbalance. Simply stating that 'ethical sourcing is expensive and may reduce profit margins' is insufficient to score the higher marks on offer. As with the points of analysis, counterbalance should be well explained, contextualised and developed to show valid and coherent chains of reasoning.

Question 2a: This definition question was not well answered by many candidates. The term 'empowerment' refers to giving authority to others allowing them to make their own decision. Many candidates referred to a way of motivating employees which was too generic to gain any marks.

Question 2b: This question required candidates to construct a supply and demand diagram question which has been examined many times. It was generally well answered. Many candidates scored full marks by fully labelling the diagram and showing the correct shift to supply. Some students are still confusing the axis and not labelling the equilibriums. Some candidates provided a shift to both demand and supply which is not rewardable.

Question 2c: This question differentiated candidates. Whilst some gained full marks by identifying an entrepreneurial motive, supporting it with relevant context and developing the point, many just repeated points from the extracts. Many wrote 'one motive was to make buying baby equipment easier'. Whilst this was a challenge faced by the entrepreneur in the extract, it is not an entrepreneurial motive. Entrepreneurial motive is a topic listed in the specification and candidates should be encouraged to show understanding of the specific topic being examined.

Question 2d: Many candidates showed good understanding of the topic of online retailing. However, as with 1d, many candidates were not providing developed points of counterbalance. Just stating 'customers may not have access to the internet' is insufficient to reach high level 3 marks. Points must be developed to show logical chains of reasoning in the context of the specific business mentioned. As a result, many students failed to meet the top-level descriptors.

Question 2e: I will reiterate the comments given in the introduction as this question was not generally answered well. This was due to the fact that candidates do not always read the question thoroughly. They were asked to assess if the use of flexible working would improve employee performance. Employee performance is a topic specifically listed in the specification. Whilst students clearly understood the merits and problems of flexible working, they failed to assess its impact on employee performance. A large number of students wrote about how it would be of benefit to the business with no links to employee performance. Due to this they failed to answer the question set.

Question 3: This question proved accessible to the majority of candidates who were able to show some understanding of the marketing mix. However, too many candidates focussed solely on why product was an important element of the marketing mix to Dyson. Many then proceeded to repeat the information given in the extracts about price, place or promotion without making suggestion as to why these elements of the mix may be more/equally as important as product.

Some candidates confused the marketing mix with the design mix which others focussed on a product orientated approach.

Whilst some candidates achieved a level 4 score; many are failing to reach high level 4 due to lack of the ability to weigh up competing arguments to propose a solution or recommendation to their answer.

Summary

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

- As with the last exam series, 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.
- Whilst it is encouraging to see more students providing points of counterbalance to their answers, they often fail to develop these answers to show causes and consequences. 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.
- Again, it is encouraging to see that more candidates are attempting to use the extracts provided to contextualise their responses. 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. Stand alone evidence will not be rewarded.

