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International Advanced Subsidiary Level in Business

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Introduction

The paper differentiated learners well. Some learners were well prepared for the exam. They showed sound knowledge of the business topics and good understanding of the command words. It is apparant that more learners are using the extracts well to provide context to their answers. It is also encouraging that a higher proportion of learners are attempting to provide counterbalance when answering the discuss and assess questions.
There was no evidence to suggest that learners had issues with timing with most learners attempting all questions.

The main reason for learners underachieving in this series was the fact they did not always address the question set. Question 2e was a prime example of this. They were asked to assess how competitors were impacted by Shein, a fashion business. Many learners wrote about the methods Shein used when competing in the market and did not offer suggestions as to how this might impact other buinesses in the market.

A topic that caused some difficulties to some learners was price elasticity of demand (PED). The same mistakes were made on this paper as seen when this topic was previously examined. Many learners wrote about demand factors and not PED factors. Centres should ensure the learners are able to distinguish between the two topics.

There are still learners who are failing to provide developed 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 schemes. There is also a distinct lack of supported recommendations provided on the assess and evaluation questions which prevents learners from reaching the top of level 4 in the mark scheme.

Report on individual questions

Question 01(a)

Most learners were awarded 1 or 2 marks for showing knowledge of an entrepreneur. Most learners recognised it refers to someone who takes risk and starts their own business. Learners are reminded that no marks are awarded for giving examples of entrepreneurs.

Question 01(b)

This supply and demand question was well answered by many learners who scored full marks. However, there were learners who fail to label the diagram or the equilibrium points and missed out on marks. There are still learners who show a shift to both demand and supply, and centres are reminded that learners are not awarded marks for this.

Question 01(c)

This question was well answered by many learners who identified two disadvantages to the business of making employees redundant. Many learners correctly provided context to support the knowledge and developed each point to show the impact on the business. However, some learners wrote about the problems redundancy caused the employees and failed to score any marks. This is an example of learners not reading the question thoroughly.

Question 01(d)

Most learners showed understanding of the term innovation and provided reasons why innovation had led to business success. The counterbalance for this question was rarely of a high level. Many learners gave disadvantages of the strategy used by the business which was not what the question asked. Ideally learners should have suggested other factors that may have played a part in the success of the business.

Question 01(e)

This question differentiated learners and was unfortunately poorly answered by many learners, despite this topic being asked in previous series. The question required learners to examine how marketing strategies may differ when selling B2B compared to B2C. Whilst some learners were able to correctly explain the differences and then counterbalance this with reasons why the strategies may not differ, many learners simply wrote about the advantages of using certain marketing strategies. This is not what the question asked.

Question 02(a)

This definition question was unfortunately not well answered by many learners. The term 'markets ' refers to the interaction between suppliers and customers. Many learners presented answers such as ' a place where suppliers sell goods'. This is inadequate and too basic a response for a candidate studying business studies at A level.

Question 02(b)

This question required learners to calculate the revenue of a business. The final answer was a whole number, yet many learners rounded the final answer which was not required.

Question 02(c)

This question differentiated learners. It is a common mistake that learners confuse factors of demand with factors that influence price elasticity of demand (PED). Whilst some gained full marks by identifying a PED factor, supporting it with relevant context and developing the point, many offered factors such as change in income or trends which is not correct. However, learners were able to gain up to two knowledge marks for defining PED.

Question 02(d)

Many learners showed some understanding of cost-plus pricing and gave some reasonable analysis. However a high number of learners simply wrote about Shein selling at a low price, which was not answering the question. This question differentiated learners with the more able learners providing valid disadvantages of cost-plus pricing.

Question 02(e)

This question again differentiated learners. Some learners correctly gave reasons why the growth of Shein impacting its competitors eg they may face lower sales or possibly forced to change their marketing strategy/prices. This was often counterbalanced by the fact that some high-end fashion retailers may not be impacted by Shein due to their USP or brand loyalty. However, many learners failed to answer his question adequately and failed to write about the impact Shein were having on competitors. Instead, many learners wrote about how Shein had a USP in the fashion market and due to this failed to reach the higher level descriptors of the mark scheme.

Question 03

Most learners were able to achieve level two or above on this 20-mark question. This question proved accessible to many learners who were able to show some understanding of employee welfare. However, most learners confused sales maximisation with profit maximisation. Centres are encouraged to ensure learners are able to distinguish between these two business objectives. The better learners provided coherent chains of reasoning to evaluate the options to explain the impact on the business. Weaker learners failed to develop their reasons or provide a solution or recommendation to their answer.

Summary

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

- Whilst it is encouraging to see more learners 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 learners 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.

- Whilst it is encouraging to see that more learners are attempting to use the extracts provided to contextualise their responses, learners 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.

- As with the last exam series, the biggest reason learners underachieved on this paper was because learners failed to answer the specific question asked. It is imperative that learners read the questions carefully and re-read them a second time.