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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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In Business (WBS14 01)

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As expected, there was only a relatively small entry for this sitting of the paper. It proved to be another accessible exam paper for most students. The questions discriminated well, with candidates accessing a wide range of marks, with some good, and occasionally very good, responses to the questions set.

There were some excellent and thoughtful responses, particularly for the longer 20 mark questions. By contrast, there were also some very weak responses that showed little understanding of, or even familiarity with, the specification content.

As ever, the main reasons for some students underachieving were the usual ones of not heeding command words and not reading the questions carefully enough. Some candidates missed out on marks because they did not answer the question that was set. This was the case for question 1c where the product life cycle was ignored, question 1d which was often just a generic response on exchange rates, question 2 which was often about globalisation in general rather than its effect on businesses and for question 3 the instruction to focus on the local economy was often missed.

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 from the case study will not access the higher levels of the mark scheme. It was however, gratifying to see that some centres are heeding the advice offered in previous reports and encouraging students to make good use of examples to support their arguments.

SECTION A

Question 1a

This was a straightforward elasticity calculation and should have been an easy start to the paper for many candidates. However, a significant number failed to use the minus sign in their final answer or gave the answer as a percentage, thus missing out on marks.

Question 1b

Constructing a demand and supply diagram showing a leftward shift of the demand curve was generally answered well. A few candidates mistakenly moved the supply curve.

Question 1c

Many seemed to miss the main point of the question which was about extending the product life cycle and instead launched into the generic benefits of entering a new market in terms of increased sales and profits. Better responses looked at the benefits of using an existing product that had already gone through the development stage thus saving on costs and using it in a new market to start the product

life cycle again. Balance was usually seen as to the suitability of an existing product in a new market and how much research or adaptation may be needed.

Question 1d

Exchange rates are usually a tricky topic for some students and this question was no exception. Many just repeated a generic answer about exchange rates and ignored the bit about a business wanting to enter a market. Some became rather confused with the whole concept. Better responses considered whether a business was entering a market to sell or to produce. Consideration was given to the levels of disposable income left to consumers after buying more expensive imported necessities which, in the case of Kenya, would be reduced. Assessment looked at price and income elasticity and other factors besides exchange rates.

Question 1e

Most candidates found this to be the more straightforward of the two 12 mark questions. The benefits for a global business of adapting its products or services to meet different cultural and social factors was generally well understood and explained, often with good use of examples. Most looked at increased sales, customer loyalty and competitive advantage. Less well expressed were counter arguments with the most common being an increase in costs and the need for more market research. Some looked at the nature of the product or service and the degree to which it may or may not need adaptation.

SECTION B

Both case studies and questions were popular and accessible to most students and acted as good platforms from which they could build convincing answers. For some they were perhaps too popular and the focus of the questions ignored as they attempted to write all they knew on globalisation or MNCs.

As has been pointed out in previous reports, the reasons that students that did not do so well in the 20 mark questions, were usually because they had simply copied out, or re-written, the evidence with little or no attempt at analysis or evaluation. Good conclusions were rare, simply re-writing previously made points added little to the answer. The use of examples beyond the case studies was rare but some responses did make good use of examples from wider reading and past papers to good effect.

Once again, the key to doing well in these longer questions is to fully develop the chains of reasoning, look at the competing arguments and support them with evidence before reaching a supported conclusion or judgement.

Question 2

Globalisation was a well understood topic with many good responses looking at the ways in which it affected businesses. These looked mainly at access to a wider market and the benefits that would bring in terms of sales, the greater availability of resources including labour, access to technologies, better communications and the impact of trade blocs and free-trade agreements. Some candidates under achieved, because although they understood the various impacts of globalisation, they did not link them to businesses which was the focus of the question.

Balance was usually seen in terms of those businesses that gained and those that lost out. The benefits of globalisation are not equally shared, smaller and domestic businesses could be overwhelmed by much bigger and more powerful multinationals. Globalisation has in some cases increased protectionism to the detriment of some businesses. Once again, some responses just listed all the problems of globalisation without linking them back to the impact on businesses.

Question 3

This was probably the better answered of the two 20 mark questions. MNCs and their impact is a well understood part of the specification but as mentioned earlier, some responses neglected to read the question carefully enough and produced a generic response that did not concentrate on the local economy. Any impacts that referred to the wider economy needed to be linked back to the local one. Most responses were able to show that an MNC was likely to create jobs in the local economy both directly and indirectly. Skills transfer, improvements in local infrastructure, support for local schools and health and welfare programmes were all valid lines of argument.

Assessment usually questioned the extent or permanence of any benefits to the local economy. The quality of any employment, possible exploitation of the workforce, the footloose nature of some MNCs and competition for local businesses were all used. Some answers were well illustrated with relevant examples, less convincing ones were either generic or just re-wrote the extract about *Totalenergies* without applying it to the question.

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 (and neatly please!)
- Do add a relevant conclusion to the longer questions