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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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In Business Studies (4BS1) Paper 01

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Introduction:

The November 2024 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 not as prepared for the exam and lacked understanding of some topics. Many students failed to show sound understanding of price skimming and Total Quality Management (TQM).

The main reasons for students underachieving were the usual ones of not using context in their answers especially on the 'state' questions. It is worth reminding students once again of the need to read the extracts carefully and use the evidence provided to apply context to their responses.

Whilst there has been a definite improvement over the last few years, there are still students who are failing to provide counterbalance to the justify and evaluate questions. To assist centres in their preparation for future examinations it is worth noting that the mark scheme does include the Assessment Objectives (AO) for all questions. The breakdown for each AO can be seen on page 7 of the Getting Started To Teach guide.

Report on individual questions

Question 1

The multiple-choice questions were generally well answered with many candidates achieving full marks. However question 1a(i) saw only half of the candidates selecting the correct answer and appeared to confuse financial and non-financial methods of motivation.

Question 1 (b) – this question saw around two thirds of candidates correctly defining the term stakeholder although some candidates confused the term with shareholder.

Question 1 (c) – many candidates were able to correctly define the term social enterprise.

Question 1 (d) – this question was not well answered by the majority of candidates. This 'state' question required students to suggest a non-current asset that Saha may own. Whilst many were able to recall a non-current asset the responses were not in context.

Question 1 (e) – a calculation question where over two thirds of candidates gained full marks.

Question 1 (f) – Many candidates showed some understanding of limited liability but many were not able to successfully develop their answers to show the consequence to the business or the business owner.

Question 1 (g) – whilst many candidates showed good understanding of methods of primary research, some failed to read the question carefully and gave generic answers about the advantages of primary research and therefore did not fully answer the question.

Question 2

Question 2 (a) – Historically the ‘State’ questions are not well answered by candidates. Candidates are still failing to contextualise their answers. In both papers candidates showed understanding of the topics but due to lack of context could not access the one mark available.

Question 2 (b) – again, another ‘State’ question which was not well answered by candidates due to not contextualising their points.

Question 2 (c) – An ‘explain’ question where candidates had to explain one disadvantage of flow production. It was generally well answered but some candidates struggled to demonstrate sound understanding – often stating that flow production may lead to poor quality.

Question 2 (d) – An accessible question on ‘above the line promotion’ which resulted in many good answers. Whilst some candidates understood the term well and were awarded the full 3 marks, others were not familiar with the term and wrote generically about promotion or below the line promotion methods.

Question 2 (e) – The majority of candidates gained 2 or more marks for this question as they were able to correctly identify an advantage of a business locating near to its supplier.

Question 2 (f) – for this question candidates were asked to choose between crowdfunding and a loan as a means of funding expansion of a business. Many students showed good understanding of one or both of the options and applied this understanding to Saha. Many of the candidates accessed level 2 by expanding on their answers but often lacking balance or simply provided one line of evaluation which lacked any development.

Question 3

Question 3 (a) – not a particularly well answered question with only around a half of candidates showing knowledge of the term legislation.

Question 3 (b) – this ‘outline’ question continues to provide a challenge for some candidates. The response to this question must be in the context of Saha to gain the full available marks. Some candidates did well to identify a valid reason why Saha may dismiss an employee but failed to develop this reason.

Question 3 (c) – a well answered calculation question where the majority of candidates gained at least one mark for workings, with around two thirds gaining full marks available for calculating cash outflow.

Question 3 (d) – a question that differentiated candidates. Whilst many were able to identify why a business might fail these responses were often underdeveloped or were not in the context of Saha.

Question 3 (e) – for this question candidates were asked to choose between price skimming and cost-plus pricing. One quarter of the candidates gained no marks due to lack of understanding of price skimming. Many students are under the impression that price skimming is setting a low price and appeared to be possibly confusing this pricing strategy with penetration pricing.

Question 4

Question 4 (a) – a calculation question which has been well answered by the majority of candidates.

Question 4 (b) – a question which saw mixed results. It was encouraging that many candidates understood the term MNC and attempted to give advantages of becoming an MNC. Many were awarded level two marks. For the majority of answers however candidates failed to provide context to reach higher level 3 marks.

Question 4 (c) – Unfortunately this question was particularly poorly answered with the majority of students failing to show sound or detailed understanding of TQM. A large majority showed understanding of the importance of quality products but not specifically how the introduction of TQM would impact Saha. Those candidates who accessed level 3 considered and explained the specific benefits and limitations that TQM brings rather than providing a generic answer about providing quality robots.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice for both paper 1 and paper 2:

- Context is crucial to gain the top marks. The extracts provide evidence that candidates can utilise to support their answers. Any question which refers to a specific business should give answers that are in the context of that business. This should be remembered when answering the one mark 'state' questions where answers need to be specifically applied to the business referred to in the exam paper.
- 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 specifically addressing the question posed. This is specifically pertinent to question 4c where many students failed to show adequate knowledge of TQM.
- 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 justify and evaluate questions students must always provide a balanced assessment. Failing to provide developed counterbalance means it is extremely unlikely the candidate can reach the top level in the mark scheme.

