

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

International GCSE Business Studies
(4BS0)

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GENERAL COMMENTS

As mentioned in previous years, it was evident that many students had gained a great deal of business knowledge from studying the course and this was apparent in the answers given. Unfortunately this was not always followed up by (i) applying the knowledge gained to the questions asked and this then (ii) restricted the students' access to the full mark range. Perhaps the scenario interested the students more this year, or they could relate to it better, as there were fewer students giving answers which were totally irrelevant to the background or situation.

As commented on in previous reports, there are still a number of students who answer the questions from a generic point of view and do not apply their answers to the context. They are therefore, be unable to access the full range of marks available for questions. As mentioned last year, the markscheme includes the Assessment Objectives to help in the preparation of students for future examinations. All four of the Assessment Objectives are covered throughout the paper and the percentage breakdown of each AO can be seen on page 8 of the Teacher's Guide. On page 14 there are examples of the command words used that indicate which of the AO's are being tested. In a question where more than one AO is being tested the command word will always refer to the highest AO.

It is also worth reiterating yet again, that the examination paper is marked using the online 'ePEN' system, therefore students must indicate if they have continued their answer somewhere else on the paper. Although many students did heed the advice given in previous years, there were are still a number who did not. It is also important that students clearly label the additional pages to show the which question they are continuing with.

COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

Section A

Question 1

The multiple choice questions were answered quite well by the majority of the students.

However there appeared to be some confusion with 1 a (iii), where a number of students thought that induction training might include, off-the-job training. This might well be the case but all new employees have to have some health and safety training. The remainder of the multiple choice question were answered well by students.

In part 1 b – a number of students did not follow the instructions given for this task, often writing the phrases into the diagram as opposed to the letters. Students tended to either gain the full marks available or gain nothing. Some had put the correct order but the wrong way round.

In part 1 c – Over half the students were able to gain the two marks available. Often students gave rather brief advantages such as “more money” without explaining what it actually meant and how it would be advantageous to the partnership.

In part 1 d - Again in this part of the question students did not fully expand their disadvantage to gain the second mark available, although most were able to realise that the profits would have to be shared and there could be disagreements between the partners. It was pleasing to note that students had realised that the question was asking for disadvantages and not advantages.

In part 1 e – Students clearly understood the importance of consumer satisfaction and realised that it created a good reputation and that customers would return. A number of students failed to gain the additional marks available; they could have further developed a reason or given additional ones, or even given the reverse of the argument.

Question 2

In part 2 a (i) -The majority of students were able to work out the gross profit for Rojaz.

In part 2 a (ii) – This was also well answered by the majority of students, however care should be taken to ensure that students follow the format of the example. For each of the coffee shop’s ratios there was a decimal point. Students should therefore have followed the examples given and not rounded down to a whole number.

In part 2 b (i) – This question was not answered well by the majority of students. Some students answered 2 b (ii) in this section, which could not gain them the marks. Also a number did not read the question carefully and failed to give an example of why using gross profit ratio is limiting. A number of students repeated the formula given on page 2. It is important that students read the questions carefully before answering.

In part 2 b (ii) – As always the finance section of the paper seems to cause concern for some students. They were able to give basic comments on the analysis of which coffee shop performed the best. However most were unable to develop the points to gain the full marks available. Some students confused the figures and mixed up the companies.

In part 2 c (i) – Less than half of the students gained full marks on this question by giving the importance of objectives for a business. A number were able to describe what an objective was which gained them a mark.

In part 2 c (ii) – This question seemed to challenge the students and was not well answered at all. Students often gave answers such as ‘raise prices’, or ‘advertise’ or ‘expand’. The examples given must also be relevant to the context, rather than general comments being made. Perhaps this section 1.1 ‘Objectives’ of the syllabus needs to be clarified more for students in the future.

In part 2 d – Again this was another question that was not well answered by the majority of students. This topic comes under 1.3 ‘Factors of production’. Students often repeated the scenario as to why the coffee shop was labour intensive. Some students mentioned that Rojaz should open longer. Another common answer was that the shop workers would have to work harder. Some students discussed why they were not capital intensive because they had only just started out in business and could not afford the machinery, which may be relevant but did not answer the question asked.

Question 3

In part 3 a – The few students that fully understood the question and gained the marks available, did so because they were able to justify why employing someone they did not know was better than someone they did know. Often many students reversed the arguments. A number of students were able to give reasons but did not justify them to gain all the marks.

In part 3 b (i) - Over half of the students were able to describe how the banks could help Rojaz with bank loan being the most popular reason.

In part 3 b (ii) – Suppliers was not as well answered, but students realised that most suppliers were able to offer discounts for large orders, or deliver the goods to the shop. Some students understood that suppliers often given trade credit to purchasers of their goods. A number of students tended to repeat the rubric about “coffee, tea and ingredients for making cakes”.

In part 3 c – A large number of students confused what a free uniform was and often described the benefits of the staff being able to wear their own clothes and that this would make them feel better and work at a better rate. A free uniform, is being something that the staff are supplied with, a uniform to wear at work, thus saving them having to buy clothes for work. If students understood the term and used it correctly they were able to gain the marks. Bonus – was understood by more students as they realised that staff would get more money if they worked harder, however most were unable to develop their answer further to gain the additional marks available.

In part 3 d – Most of the students appeared to opt for option B, the loyalty card. Students were able to gain some marks but did not develop their answers sufficiently to gain the higher level. However they often repeated the stem of the question and constantly referred to loyal customers. Some were able to justify their choice and realised that the alternative would be very expensive for the coffee shop and might not achieve the business they were hoping for. Students should be encouraged to read carefully the stem carefully and then not keep repeating it in their answers.

Section B

Question 4

In part 4 a (i) - Approximately half of the students gained the two marks for this question showing that they understood what the term meant. However, a number of students tended to confuse branding with copyright.

In part 4 a (ii) - Those students that fully understood what branding meant where able to gain the marks available. Some students gave very valid options that Rojaz could use do to brand its sandwiches. Although some students tended to discuss methods of advertising and how it would help brand the product, with some of the advertising aimed at the larger company, which did not answer the question correctly.

In part 4 b - This question was not as well answered as anticipated. A number of students did not read the question properly where it asked for analysis of the two primary methods they could use. They tended to give detailed descriptions of the two methods they had chosen which was demonstrating their knowledge, whereas the mark scheme was looking more for more analysis and evaluation of what Rojaz could actually do with the information gained. This question highlights the importance of students reading the question carefully and having a knowledge of the command words to help and guide them when answering the questions.

In part 4 c - This question was not well answered by a large percentage of the students. This may be because they confused EFTPOS with EPOS. Many students mentioned that it would help with stock , which is not relevant, a small coffee shop would probably not have large quantities of stock. The abbreviation was given out in full in the question and this should have helped the students to understand that it was about transferring

money. A common misconception from a number of students was that it would reduce the queues at the coffee shop, this is not always correct, in some cases it can take longer if there are problems with the connection etc. There were some very good comments made about the coffee shop not having funds held in the shop during the day and possibly night and saving Ronald and Jazwinder having to go to the bank as often. Some students even mentioned that people could phone in their orders using their cards to avoid going to the coffee shop, a very valid comment.

Question 5

In part 5 a - It appears that a large proportion of the students opted for a tax on non-biodegradable products rather than a reduction in waste collection. For some students there was a misunderstanding of what biodegradable actually meant and this could have had a detrimental effect on their answer. Most students realised that this would have an adverse effect on Rojaz and that they would have to change the products they used. Some students even mentioned that if undertaken it could be made into a positive point for Rojaz with their environmentally friendly outlook on the products they used.

In part 5 b – Many of the students did not appear to understand what the term delegation meant. Some commented on appointing a manager and what the new manager would do, which was not really what the question was asking. A number of students tended to believe that the manager would be very stressed out with all the responsibilities he/she would have. Those students that knew what delegation meant were able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses, although the weaknesses of delegating were covered in more depth, than the strengths.

In part 5 c - as in past papers students were asked to consider two options and justify why they have selected one and rejected the other. Only a few good answers were seen in a question that should have given students the opportunity to shine and develop their answers. Many students wasted time describing how they would hold weekly meetings, with all the staff present and how this could cause problems together with how using text messaging could be used. If the students had read the stem correctly the question was asking “how they communicate with each other”. Many students commented on the fact that Ronald and Jazwinder may be travelling around the world and that it would be easy to communicate. Again students must remember the context of the scenario and that it is probably unlikely in this instance that the owners would be travelling around the world.

The question asked for students to justify why they had chosen one and not the other. Students tended to gain the marks for their chosen option but did not gain the full marks for the option they had rejected. Therefore, comparatively few students were able to comment successfully on the method they had chosen, whilst rejecting the other option and justifying their reasons through analysis and evaluation. There were still a number of students who were writing in bullet point format. This did not allow them to gain the analysis and evaluation marks available. Some students were able

to comment on the method chosen and justify their reasons whilst rejecting the other in detail.

It is worth pointing out to students that this question does carry the most marks and they should allow sufficient time to answer it. A number of students only completed a few lines and therefore did not gain many marks. As mentioned previously some students continue on additional paper but if there is no indication on the examination paper that they have done so, valuable marks could be lost.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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