

GCE



Chief Examiner's Report Business Studies

Summer Series 2017



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in Business Studies for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCE BUSINESS STUDIES

Chief Examiner's Report

Overview

This was the first assessment in respect of the revised specification (AS Level). There were two examination units assessed – Introduction to Business (AS1) and Growing the Business (AS2). A review of scripts suggests that many candidates had undertaken a degree of preparation in advance of the examinations for the revised specification. Coupled with improvements in examination technique, candidates successfully completed their answers within the time scale permitted. A number of candidates appeared to misunderstand the requirements of the stated questions, hence answers to the final question in each examination paper tended to be curtailed. However, the candidature appeared to respond positively to the revised structure of the qualification and examinations.

A significant number of candidates used additional pages/booklets including the original answer booklet, for the evaluation questions but focused on adding volume rather than depth to their answers. Consequently, the number of candidates attaining marks in the upper mark band range (Level 4) was limited. There was, however, some evidence of careful planning by the more able candidates who succeeded in developing analytical points whilst remaining focused on the purpose of the question throughout their answers. This often led to in-depth evaluation of the arguments identified and a realistic final judgement.

With the exception of the (d) questions, each question clearly states the number of discussion points expected in a candidate's answer. This has the benefit of providing guidance to a candidate as they progress through each examination. In addition, a holistic marking approach was implemented as appropriate throughout the examination papers, which ensured consistency throughout the marking process and across the candidature. The revised mark schemes are much more explicit in relation to the award of marks in each examination.

The following are suggested areas for improvement:

Candidates must prepare for each examination in advance and are encouraged to:

- Read the 'Instructions to Candidates' section on the front cover of the examination paper – it contains key guidance notes to the candidate which they are expected to observe throughout the examination; in addition, candidates must read the stimulus material before attempting to answer the questions.
- Understand the requirements of each question and carefully select the appropriate information to facilitate development of an answer.
- Plan a logical and thoughtful structure focused on answering the question.
- Use the stimulus material effectively to support and develop analysis of key points.
- Focus on building analysis and development of a chain of reasoning, using in-depth logical arguments based on sound knowledge.
- Ensure the inclusion of a final judgement and a balanced argument, reflecting the points being argued to attain marks in a higher mark band (Level 3 or 4).
- Correctly annotate the appropriate answers in respect of the assessment of quantitative skills and following the precise instructions - demonstration of workings and/or rounding of answers to the correct number of decimal places.
- Refrain from repeating points - this wastes valuable time and will not attract marks.

- Be precise in their use of terminology, for example, 'cashflow', in the context of a cashflow forecast.
- Use clear hand writing – this is essential as it enables the examiner to award the correct marks to the candidate.
- Clearly label and securely attach additional sheets (if used), to the candidates' booklet by using a treasury tag provided for the purpose.

Assessment Unit AS 1 Introduction to Business

General Comments

Many candidates used additional sheets to answer the questions. In most of these cases they were used to answer the evaluative questions and only added volume rather than value to the answer. Successful candidates gained full marks by documenting focussed answers to each question. Additional pages should only be used when absolutely necessary. Quality of handwriting is a real concern to the examining team and candidates must address this - they need to ensure that their handwriting is legible.

Application of knowledge to the case study/industry needs to be developed further as it is an aid to the development of candidates' arguments. Those candidates who did not apply information from the case study to support and develop their analysis were unable to gain marks at a higher mark band.

In terms of structuring answers, candidates' who employed the 'BLT' format tended to perform competently (see CCEA microsite for resources). The final judgement should be more in-depth. In addition, candidates who employed the AJIM model (see CCEA microsite for resources) as a way of structuring their answers appeared to be more successful in obtaining marks at the higher mark band (Level 4).

Q1 Case Study - Boojum

(a) Adding Value

The majority of candidates performed well on this question showing an understanding of the concept of adding value. Most candidates managed to apply the term to Boojum Limited.

(b) (i) Percentage Share (Quantitative Skills)

A significant number of candidates did not produce a fully correct computation of their answer. Many candidates selected the wrong figures for the calculation. Also, some candidates calculated the answer correctly but did not follow the instructions laid out in the question, i.e. statement of answers to two decimal places. Such responses could not be awarded full marks.

(ii) Entrepreneurial Motives

Many responses appeared to be well answered with some knowledge of entrepreneurs. However, the question required candidates to discuss the characteristics of an entrepreneur. Some responses alluded to business objectives and attracted no marks. This question was well applied to Boojum Limited and analytical skills appeared to be evident in the majority of scripts reviewed.

(c) Private Limited Company

Knowledge and understanding of the topic appeared to be of a very good standard with respect to the majority of candidates. Many candidates discussed three benefits of Boojum operating a limited company, but many answers appeared to lack the depth in respect of application and analysis of key points. Candidates need to draw upon additional information from the case study and their own general knowledge to develop comprehensive answers.

(d) Online Technology in the Recruitment Process

Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of online technology

with some good answers documented. Some candidates took time to think and plan their answers developing a range of arguments to offer a balanced answer. However some candidates failed to answer the question stated. Many candidates failed to reach the top level mark band because the points stated were largely undeveloped. Candidates need to link their points directly to the question using information from the case study. Their arguments lacked the depth needed for application to the case study and the industry as a whole. Candidates need to ensure that, as they develop their analysis points, they remain linked to the question.

Q2 Case Study - Eat-Well Café

(a) Niche Market

Most of the candidature demonstrated a good understanding of the concept of a niche market with some very good answers stated, which were well applied to Eat-Well Café.

(b) (i) Percentage Change (Quantitative Skills)

Many candidates performed well on this question showing an understanding of how to compute percentage change. Some correct answers lost marks because the answers stated did not show the answer in the correct format. Candidates are advised to show their workings, including statement of a formula. This is a good technique as it will enable incorrect answers to gain some marks.

(ii) Demand

This proved to be an accessible question to the candidature, with some very good answers. The candidates utilised case study material in their answers. High quality answers demonstrated full discussion and analysis of key points with respect to how they influence the demand for free from food.

(c) Off The Job Training

The vast majority of candidates were able to identify and explain the key benefits to Eat Well of using off-the-job training. Candidates need to ensure that each benefit identified is well developed and applied specifically to Eat-Well Café and/or the industry. Candidates need to ensure that, as they develop their analysis of each point, it remains linked to the question.

(d) Democratic Leadership on Staff Motivation

Many candidates addressed the requirements of the question. However, some candidates did not link democratic leadership to its impact on staff motivation. Candidates must read the question carefully and identify the key aspect of the question. Candidates who scored high marks (typically Level 4) correctly stated two points well developed, analysed and evaluated. Such candidates applied key knowledge points to the case study and to Sophie's democratic style of leadership. Strong candidates analysed how this style impacts on staff motivation by using a logical structure within their answers. Evaluation of each point was directly linked to the point made and highly detailed. Stronger candidates concluded their answers using a detailed final judgement.

Assessment Unit AS2 Growing The Business

Overall, the paper was effective in allowing candidates of differing abilities to respond positively to the range of questions set. Successful candidates provided excellent and structured responses, using appropriate information from the case study with well-developed analysis and in-depth evaluative points, to the stated questions. A review of scripts indicated that the least successful candidates proffered a lack of question structure and subject knowledge. Their responses were generic with little or no application from the case study.

The 'd' questions discriminated well between candidates with the emphasis on comprehensive evaluation permitting only the more successful candidates to achieve marks at the highest mark band (Level 4).

Q1 Case Study

(a) Percentage Change (Quantitative Skills)

The majority of candidates calculated the answers correctly but there were some issues with annotation, e.g. failure to include the % sign and also careless errors in rounding up answers to 2 decimal places. Offering formulae and showing workings would also have been beneficial for some candidates who appeared to make errors or had a limited understanding of the question.

(b) Market Segmentation

This was generally well answered with most candidates achieving full marks for knowledge and application (AO1 and AO2). However, weak analysis hindered many candidates from attaining the higher marks in Level 3 mark band.

(c) Primary Research Methods

Despite the three methods of primary market research stated clearly within the stimulus material, some candidates struggled to select alternatives which were often inappropriate, e.g. sampling. In many instances candidates who chose surveys did not differentiate between questionnaires, telephone surveys, postal surveys, thus leading to a lot of repetition in the answers provided. Furthermore, only the better candidates linked the analysis to the purpose of the question i.e. to maintain Daly's market share.

(d) Price and Promotion

Many candidates demonstrated a good standard of knowledge and understanding of the concepts of Price and Promotion, using the evidence in the case study effectively to score full marks in respect of application (AO2). In general, the analysis was quite good but only the more able candidates linked this to the purpose of the question, i.e. to assist Daly's in increasing sales. Many answers lacked depth in respect of the evaluation of key points (AO4), hence the number of candidates achieving marks at the higher mark band (Level 4) was limited. Some of the weaker candidates wasted time discussing all of the 4P's so struggled to complete this question effectively.

Q2 Case Study

(a) Break Even and Target Profit (Quantitative Skills)

The majority of candidates performed well in this question and followed the instruction by showing their workings. This is a good technique as it ensures candidates can gain marks for the process even if they calculated the answer incorrectly.

Q2 (b) Social Media

This question was generally well answered by candidates with the majority focusing on the cost-effectiveness of using social media to promote 4G. Weaker candidates simply wrote at length about social media without linking it to the business. Also, as previously stated in the overview, time was wasted by many candidates evaluating points related to social media - this had negative consequences in respect of the depth of analysis and evaluation required in Question 2d, for those candidates who left this as their final question.

(c) Improving Cash Flow

This proved to be a popular question with candidates offering a range of valid suggestions as to how Paula could improve her cashflow. Higher-ability candidates used the stimulus material effectively and chose methods that gained full marks in respect of application of knowledge (AO2). Analysis however, was not particularly detailed and meant that a limited number of candidates achieved the top Level 3 mark. Some weaker candidates provided more than the three required methods and displayed only knowledge and understanding throughout – neither of which gained additional marks.

(d) Cash Flow Forecast

This question was attempted by the majority of candidates with varying degrees of success. Many candidates achieved marks in the Level 3 band but few provided evidence of in-depth analysis and evaluation required to attain marks in the higher mark band (Level 4).

A significant number candidates reverted to the old-style format/structure of discussing 3 points instead of 2 key points, therefore the quality of analysis and evaluation lacked sufficient substance to warrant the award of marks in the highest mark band (Level 4). There appeared to be strong evidence to suggest that candidates confused the terms 'cashflow' and 'profit'; in a small number of scripts 'breakeven analysis' was included which was inappropriate. For many weaker candidates, the response was simply the pros and cons of a cashflow forecast with little or no application taken from the stimulus material.

Contact details

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