

GCE



**Chief Examiner's and
Principal Moderator's Report
Professional
Business Services**

Summer Series 2022



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2022 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 Professional Business Services

Chief Examiner's Report

AS Assessment Units

AS Subject Overview

The GCE AS Professional Business Services Summer 2022 examination series addressed various aspects of the specification allowing candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and show application, analysis and evaluation of the same, to support their final judgements.

The examining team was pleased with the quality of most candidate responses. We adopted a positive approach when assessing the answers provided, notably, in cases where handwriting was very difficult to read. We would also like to congratulate all those candidates who used subject specific terminology to good effect in their responses this year.

For questions which require analysis, discussion or evaluation, responses should be clearly structured with AO1, AO2 and AO3 aspects for each point. Questions requiring discussion or evaluation, must include a final judgement. It is good practice to number the points made in each answer and candidates should read the questions and command words carefully to ensure their answers are clear, specific and relate to the question.

Assessment Unit AS 1 Introduction to Professional Business Services

Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the relevant theory for this unit. The following points should be noted for future series:

Q1 (6 marks) was used to examine:

- Identify three objectives of an organisation in the public sector.
 - Define the term business regulation and give one example.
- (a)** Some candidates identified three objectives of an organisation in the public sector. Several candidates mixed up the public sector with the private sector and gave incorrect objectives.
- (b)** Most candidates defined the term 'business regulation' but struggled to give a valid example. Some answers lacked a sufficiently accurate definition to gain full marks.

Q2 (10 marks) was used to examine:

- Identify and explain, with an example, two business resources (factors of production) used by Conway Construction.

Most candidates identified and explained, with an example, two business resources. Some provided limited explanations for the business resources. A few candidates failed to provide examples of the business resources used by Conway Construction. To obtain full marks candidates needed to accurately identify two business resources and explain each with examples.

Q3 (10 marks) was used to examine:

- Analyse the following key elements required for Evans Accountancy Ltd to have effective relationships with clients:
 - Professionalism
 - Ethical behaviour

This question attracted a mixed range of responses. Some candidates analysed the two key elements required by Evans Accountancy Ltd to have effective relationships with clients. Conversely, many failed to demonstrate good application and analysis. To obtain full marks, candidates were required to analyse the two key elements providing explanation and application to Evans Accountancy Ltd.

Q4 (18 marks) was used to examine:

- Explain the term market share.
 - Analyse four ways in which Fermanagh Bank plc might segment their market.
- (a)** Most candidates gave a good explanation of the term market share. Some answers lacked a sufficiently accurate explanation to gain full marks.
- (b)** Responses ranged from satisfactory to good (Levels 2/3). In several cases candidates analysed the benefits instead of the ways in which Fermanagh Bank plc might segment their market. The best responses (Level 4) demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of the ways of segmenting a market. There was sound application to Fermanagh Bank plc with appropriate analysis which was clear and logical.

Q5 (16 marks) was used to examine:

- Evaluate the use of the following secondary research methods for Spelga Hotel Group to inform their plans to expand:
 - Government and agency publications
 - Online information

Several candidates were able to evaluate the use of secondary research methods for Spelga Hotel Group. In some cases, there was evidence of good knowledge, understanding and application with appropriate evaluation to Spelga Hotel Group. Some responses lacked understanding and application in one of the secondary research methods (Government and agency publications / Online information) and several candidates made no attempt to evaluate these. Several candidates failed to provide a final judgment – a requirement of an evaluation question.

Q6 (20 marks) was used to examine:

- As a professional business services consultant, you have been appointed by Capacitor Comms Ltd to provide advice to the Board of Directors. Carry out a PESTEL analysis for Capacitor Comms Ltd.

Most candidates produced very good PESTEL analyses however, many failed to achieve full marks. To access Level 4, candidates were required to show excellent knowledge and understanding of the 6 elements of the PESTEL analysis. Application to Capacitor Comms Ltd had to be excellent. In these longer response questions, candidates should read the question carefully to ensure they manage their time effectively.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit AS 2 Human Resource Services

Internal Assessment Overview

The standard of work produced for this unit was excellent. Most eCandidate Record Sheets (eCRS) were completed as required. Teachers should record the level of help given on the eCRS. Where help has been given candidates' marks should reflect this e.g. highest mark bands should not be awarded.

It is also essential for centres to include the CCEA Sample Cover Sheet (as the top page for each report), which is available on the CCEA website. The Sample Cover Sheet must clearly identify the centre number and candidate number with the mark awarded for each report submitted in the sample. The recording of marks on this Cover Sheet must match the marks that have been electronically submitted. This was not the case for some centres. It is also important that centres follow CCEA instructions and ensure all candidates sign the Sample Cover Sheet and also submit the sample in rank order of merit.

Unit Overview

The moderation process was enhanced by annotation throughout candidates' reports and as summative comments recorded on the eCRS by most teachers.

Candidates demonstrated extensive use of primary and secondary research methods in order to meet the assessment requirements. Primary research, collected through employee questionnaires and manager interviews, enabled candidates to gain the necessary level of detail needed to complete their reports. Evidence of such primary research was included in the appendices. Secondary research was also carried out to a high standard with relevant evidence referenced throughout the reports. It is important for all candidates to include their primary (pre and post testing copies) and secondary research evidence in the appendices.

It was very pleasing to note that all reports submitted by centres followed the recommended report structure outlined below:

Report Structure

Executive Summary

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Research Methods

3.0 Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Bibliography

Appendices

Each of the sections above were successfully sub-divided. For example, 1.0 Introduction, 2.0 Research Methods, 3.0 Analysis and Discussion of Findings, 4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations must follow the pattern of 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc, for all areas to be addressed within each sub-section of the report.

Centres should be mindful of the word count and teachers must encourage candidates to adhere to the recommended guideline of 3,500 - 4,000 words. Most reports were in excess of this guideline and many extended to more than 50 pages. Reports must be written in the third person. This is an important skill which should be rewarded appropriately. Candidates who did not write in the third person could not access the highest marks for the Report section. A small number of candidates did not use the prescribed line spacing of 1.5 nor include page numbering. This also impacted on the marks they could access for Report Format and Structure. These requirements are clearly stipulated on page 3 of the Internal Assessment document on the CCEA website.

The **Executive Summary** should consist of an overall summary of the key issues and areas of concern identified in the Client Brief, as well as the recommendations for the four management goals set out in the Client Brief. Centres need to ensure that candidates include an overview of the main issues and proposed recommendations of the report. Unfortunately, some candidates omitted an overview of the main issues and areas of concern identified within the Client Brief and as a consequence, were not able to access the top mark within Level 3.

In the **Introduction**, the candidates must state clearly the aim of the report, provide a succinct summary of the background information on the company, as well as an overview of the four main issues and areas of concern the company currently faces, demonstrating an understanding of these issues. A number of candidates did not do this correctly.

Research Methods must include the research objectives, identification and justification of research methods used, as well as the measures to be taken to ensure reliability and validity of the data collected. It must also include the method and size of the sample to be used for the primary research. A number of candidates omitted the reliability and validity, as well as the sample method and size from the reports, resulting in lower marks being awarded. Testing of primary research was addressed by a number of candidates. Those who failed to include any detail on testing of primary research methods were unable to access the top marks in Level 3. It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates included relevant research objectives. Candidates must include copies of their primary research tools, including the pre and post testing copies, as well as presenting primary and secondary information collected as screenshots and reference these throughout the reports. It is good practice for candidates to include all relevant primary and secondary research in appendices to support the findings in the report and these should be referenced throughout the report. Candidates should be discouraged from including excessive secondary research findings in the appendices.

In the **Analysis and Discussion of Findings**, Centres need to ensure that candidates include the relevant theory, models and concepts to support their discussion. In addition, an awareness of the wider context must be included - this was omitted by some candidates. An evaluation of research methods used to carry out the research must also be included in order for candidates to access marks in Level 4. A Level 4 mark must only be awarded to candidates who provide a comprehensive set of research findings from a variety of formats drawing together primary and secondary research for each of the four research objectives/ management goals. This should be supported by relevant theory, which addresses the issues and concerns raised in the Client Brief and provides an awareness of the wider context.

In the **Conclusion and Recommendations**, candidates need to be reminded of the importance of identifying wider issues and risks which may prevent the successful implementation of the proposed recommendations for the report. This was completed poorly by a number of candidates. Candidates must include relevant theory, models or concepts in order to support the conclusions and recommendations, as these had not been fully addressed by some. Those awarded a Level 4 mark were able to draw conclusions from their findings and provide recommendations to address the issues and concerns raised in the Client Brief. This was supported by research evidence, relevant theory, models and concepts and accompanied by relevant wider issues and risks. Candidates should be encouraged to include an updated organisational structure in line with their proposed recommendations for Your Cuisine Ltd.

The **Bibliography** was included by most candidates. Some, however, failed to use the Harvard Referencing System, a requirement of this unit. Centres need to address this for the next submission.

The moderating team was greatly encouraged by the overall quality of the reports. It is recommended that all centres attend the Agreement Trial for this unit of work to ensure full understanding of assessment arrangements for the Summer 2023 Series.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 3 Financial Decision Making

Unit Overview

Candidates demonstrated financial competency in this paper, showing good knowledge and understanding of financial calculations and the written aspects of financial decision making for DP Joinery Ltd. The following points should be noted for future series:

Q1 (26 marks) was used to examine:

- Internal and external financial resources (sources of finance)
- (a)** Most candidates explained the meaning of the term internal financial resources (sources of finance). Some responses lacked sufficient detail to gain two marks while others did not include two examples.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to explain the meaning of the term external financial resources (sources of finance). Some responses lacked sufficient detail to gain two marks while others did not include two examples.
- (c)** Many candidates were able to explain one advantage and one disadvantage of a share issue however, many failed to relate it to Derick's Joinery business.
- (d)** Almost all candidates analysed two advantages and one disadvantage of DP Joinery Ltd using an overdraft. Some responses lacked detail which limited the mark band level awarded. Additionally, some candidates included a justified conclusion – not required for this answer.

Q2 (25 marks) was used to examine:

- Financial Statements (elements of)
 - Variance analysis
 - Purposes of a cash flow forecast
 - Financial data for decision making (to expand)
- (a)** Most candidates identified two elements that Derick must include in his Income Statement and Statement of Financial Position. Some candidates mixed up the elements for each financial statement.
- (b) (i)** Most candidates calculated February's variance correctly and identified it as adverse.
- (ii)** Again, most correctly calculated the variance for March and identified it as favourable.
- (iii)** Most candidates correctly calculated the variance for April and identified it as favourable.
- (c)** Candidates were able to explain three purposes of cash flow forecasting, but some did not relate their response to Derick.
- (d)** This question was poorly answered by most candidates. Responses did analyse reasons for expanding DP Joinery Ltd but failed to use financial data as the question required. Only candidates, who included all elements required were able to access the top mark range.

Q3 (29 marks) was used to examine:

- Investment appraisal
- (a)** Almost all candidates identified two methods of investment appraisal.
- (b)** Most candidates attempted the Net Present Value (NPV) investment appraisal calculation which was very pleasing. However, a few failed to work out the cash flow for years 0-5 in Table 2 from the data provided in Table 1, as well as the present value for each year and the final answer. The Own Figure Rule (OFR) was applied where necessary.
- (c)** Many candidates were unable to clearly advise Derick on the outcome obtained for their investment appraisal calculation in Part(b). Again, the OFR was applied.
- (d)** This question was poorly answered by most candidates. Candidates did not identify the method of investment appraisal as net present value. Credit was awarded for responses where knowledge, understanding, application, analysis and evaluation with a final judgement were evident. In some instances, a justified conclusion was not given – a requirement to access the highest marks for this question.

Candidates should be reminded to read the 'information to candidates' on the front cover of the examination paper. They should note the importance of 'quality of written communication, which was addressed in several questions. It is important that teachers are aware of the holistic marking of these questions using the mark band levels as indicated in the mark scheme.

Candidates should use past examination papers and mark schemes and specimen material produced by CCEA as part of their preparation. These materials are available on the CCEA website (www.ccea.org.uk). These help candidates to become familiar with questioning techniques and time management.

Finally, the examining team was extremely pleased with how candidates responded to this year's examinations which accommodated the full ability range.

A2 Assessment Units

Assessment Unit A2 1 Technology in Business

Subject Overview

The summer 2022 A2 examinations addressed many areas of the specification providing candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate levels of knowledge, understanding, application of knowledge, understanding with analysis, discussion and evaluation of findings and a supporting final judgement.

The examining team was pleased with the quality of the written answers from the majority of candidates. The team adopted a positive approach whilst assessing candidates' responses. This was particularly relevant when faced with poor or illegible handwriting. The candidates are to be congratulated on their use of subject specific terminology in their responses.

Candidates should read questions carefully and note the command words to ensure their responses are clear, specific and related to the question. For questions which require analysis, discussion or evaluation, candidates should ensure that their responses are clearly structured with AO1, AO2 and AO3 aspects for each point made. For questions which require discussion or evaluation, a final judgement must be included. It is good practice to number the points being made.

Unit Overview

Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the relevant theory for this unit. Candidates should consider looking at previous past papers, mark schemes and Chief examiners reports for guidance. The following points should be noted for future series:

Q1 (4 marks available) was used to examine:

- Explain how a business could use technology to manage people.
- (a)** This question was generally well answered by most candidates. Those who did not answer the question well, tended to give a summary statement. To gain full marks the candidate needed to give an excellent explanation.

Q2 (8 marks available) was used to examine:

- Describe two features of Customer Relationship Management Systems (CRM).
- (a)** Some candidates failed to identify specific features and instead outlined the benefit of the technology. Candidates failed to achieve marks in their ability to provide a description of the features with many candidates only providing basic to good descriptions. Few candidates provided an excellent description of the features.

Q3 (16 marks available) was used to examine:

- In your role as a professional business services consultant for Universal VR evaluate the suitability of using social media to promote their business.
- (a)** Most candidates answered this well. Generally, candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the suitability of using social media to promote Universal VR's business. Application to Universal VR was mostly very good. When evaluating the suitability of using social media most candidates used the correct headings from the specification: Client Needs, Users, Time, Cost and Security. However, some candidates provided the advantages and disadvantages of social media when evaluating. Most candidates gave a good evaluation and provided a final judgement at the end. Some candidates appeared not to understand the command word 'evaluate' and consequently did not provide a final judgement. Several candidates used additional pages and booklets to answer this question. The more able candidates provided an in-depth evaluation. To gain top marks the candidates' evaluation of the suitability of social media to support Universal VR's promotion is appropriate, clear, and logically based on a thorough analysis.

Q4 (22 marks available) was used to examine:

- In your role as a professional business services consultant for Universal VR, identify and explain two types of threat associated with cyber security.
 - In your role as a professional business services consultant for Universal VR, evaluate how Two Factor Authentication (2FA) could make Universal VR customers' online transactions more secure.
- (a)** This question was very well answered. The majority of candidates were able to identify and give a good explanation of two types of threat associated with cyber security. Some answers lacked accurate explanation to gain full marks as more than a simple explanation was required.
- (b)** Most candidates answered this well. Generally, candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of how Two Factor Authentication (2FA) could make Universal VR customers' online transactions more secure. Application to Universal VR was mostly very good. When evaluating how the Two Factor Authentication (2FA) could make Universal VR customers' online transactions more secure most candidates give the advantages and disadvantages of Two Factor Authentication (2FA) when evaluating. Most candidates gave a good evaluation and provided a final judgement at the end. Some candidates appeared not to understand the command word 'evaluate' and consequently did not provide a final judgement. Several candidates used additional pages and booklets to answer this question. The more able candidates provided an in-depth evaluation. To gain top marks the candidates' evaluation of how Two Factor Authentication (2FA) could make Universal VR's customers online transaction more secure is appropriate, clear and logically based on a thorough analysis.

Q5 (20 marks available) was used to examine:

- In your role as a professional business services consultant for Universal VR, evaluate the use of a data centre to store their virtual reality games in one location.

- (a) A disappointing response by some candidates due to a lack of knowledge and understanding the use of a data centre to store virtual reality games in one location. Application was good to Universal VR. Some candidates provided a good evaluation and final judgement. Some candidates appeared not to understand the command word 'evaluate' and consequently did not provide a final judgement. Several candidates used additional pages and booklets to answer this question. The more able candidates provided an in-depth evaluation. To achieve top marks the candidates' evaluation of the use of a data centre to store virtual reality games in one location is appropriate, clear and logically based on a thorough analysis.

Q6 (20 marks available) was used to examine:

- Evaluate the social, moral and ethical issues for Universal VR in relation to their acceptable use policy for employees.
- (a) A disappointing response by most candidates. Some confused the social, moral, and ethical issues. Therefore, candidates struggled to construct the answer in application to Universal VR and their employees. A few candidates misinterpreted the question. Analysis was weak with a general lack of understanding was evident in many responses. Most candidates used additional pages and booklets to answer this question. Better responses provided an in-depth evaluation whilst weaker responses had a lack of analysis and extensive repetition.

Assessment Unit A2 2 Leadership and Management

NO CANDIDATES FOR THIS UNIT

Candidates should be fully aware of the 'information to candidates' on the front cover of the examination paper. This is with particular reference to the quality of written communication, which was addressed in a number of questions. It is important that teachers are aware of the holistic marking of these questions using the mark band levels as indicated in the mark scheme.

It is extremely important that candidates are prepared for such examinations using past examination papers, accompanied by the mark schemes and specimen material produced by CCEA which is available on the website (www.ccea.org.uk) as teaching and learning tools for future candidates. This would allow the summer 2023 candidates to become familiar with the questioning techniques and time management for these external examinations.

Finally, the examining team was extremely pleased with how the candidates answered this year's examination papers, which accommodated the full ability range of the 2022 candidature.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit A2 3 Project Management Skills and Processes

The work submitted for this unit was completed to an excellent standard. It was clear that almost all centres had followed CCEA's guidelines when completing this unit. Most eCandidate Record Sheets (eCRS) were completed accurately. Teachers should record the level of assistance given on the eCRS and where help has been given, marks should reflect this e.g. highest mark bands should not be awarded.

It is also essential for centres to include the CCEA Sample Cover Sheet on all work requested, which is available on the CCEA website. The Sample Cover Sheet must clearly identify the centre number and candidate number with the mark awarded for each assignment submitted in the sample. The recording of marks on this Cover Sheet must match the marks that have been electronically submitted. This was not the case for some centres. Centres must follow CCEA instructions and submit the sample in rank order of merit.

Unit Overview

The moderation process was enhanced by teacher annotation throughout candidates' assignments and as summative comments recorded on the eCRS by most teachers.

Candidates had chosen a wide and varied range of projects which allowed for knowledge and understanding, application of knowledge and understanding along with analysis and evaluation to be addressed and to access Level 3 marks.

While the quality of the work produced was excellent, centres are required to implement the following points for future submissions:

Task 1 (Introduction to Project Management) AO1: an excellent presentation and user guide were completed extremely well by many candidates. Some failed to write the User Guide in the third person and a small number of candidates confused who the User and Project Board were. To clarify the roles within the project management structure:

1. The 'User' is the person attending the project to be organised.
2. The Project Board is made up of a representative of Senior Management (Principal or Board of Governors), Project User, Project Client (who is the Fund Raising Committee), Project Supplier and the Project Manager.

A significant number of candidates were able to identify and discuss the various key documents required for Project Management. However, several candidates failed to include the plan/registers for this task.

Task 2 (Project Initiation) AO2 and AO3: was completed to a high standard as the candidates used a variety of sources to carry out primary and secondary research in order to produce the required Business Case including three options to be investigated before settling on the final project. However, the discussion and analysis of research findings was lacking in detail for several candidates in this task. Some candidates also failed to provide enough detail in elements of the Business Case, for example the risks associated. The Project Brief was completed to a high standard in most cases.

Task 3 (Project Planning) AO2 and AO3: was used to address the planning of the project with the majority of candidates using a Gantt Chart, however, limited in detail. It is beneficial for candidates to record the time, activities and milestones which may affect the project on the Gantt Chart. A number of candidates lacked detail for the Stage Review and failed to include a thorough assessment of the reason to proceed with the project.

Task 4 (Project Execution, Closure and Evaluation) AO2 and AO3: had been grouped together by a number of centres to produce one presentation for the range of checks, report and registers, steps to close the project and evaluation questionnaires. The presentation was then followed by copies of the final reports/registers and evaluation questionnaires for the client, user and project team. This was an acceptable and viable way to submit the content required for this task. However, some candidates failed to include the range of checks that would be used to review the progress of the project and steps to close the project and so did not meet the requirements of this task. Some candidates did not include the evaluation questionnaires (3) required for the user, client and project team nor a specific question to address where improvements might be made for a future project.

The correct/preferred way to complete Task 4.1 is for the candidate to identify and describe the range of checks (see below) followed by the reports and registers. Then in Task 4.2 the candidate should discuss the steps to close (see below) the project followed by the evaluation questionnaires for the client, user and project team.

A recommended/suitable range of checks would include:

- Achievement of planned objectives
- Time
- Cost
- Quality
- Change
- Risk
- Issues
- Communications
- Client acceptance of deliverables

The recommended/suitable steps to close the project would include:

- Confirm work is done as per requirement of the project
- Complete procurement closure
- Gain formal acceptance of the project
- Complete final performance reporting
- Archive records
- Update lessons learned register
- Hand over product/service
- Release the resources

A suitable bibliography was included by the candidates for Task 2 as required. However, some candidates opted to insert this at the end of the assignment while other candidates placed it at the end of Task 2. Either way was accepted.

Overall, moderation team was greatly encouraged by the quality of work submitted. It is important that all centres attend the Agreement Trial for this unit to ensure appreciation of the standard being applied and to ensure full understanding of assessment arrangements for the Summer 2023 Series.

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