

GCE



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

Summer Series 2023



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2023 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 Subject Overview

The responses in the Summer 2023 GCE AS Professional Business Services examinations were very pleasing. The examinations addressed various aspects of the specification allowing candidates the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, application of knowledge and understanding with analysis and evaluation of findings leading to supported final judgements.

Candidates are to be congratulated on their use of subject specific terminology in a range of responses.

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

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** (a) Most candidates scored full marks with a clear explanation and an example.
 (b) Most candidates scored full marks with a clear explanation and an example.
- Q2** Only a few candidates were able to identify and explain four features of a partnership to Pretty Crafts. Some provided limited explanations for the features. For full marks, candidates needed to accurately identify and explain four features of a partnership.
- Q3** Most candidates answered this question well however, several failed to demonstrate good application and analysis.
- Q4** (a) Most gave a good explanation of the term market growth. Some answers lacked sufficiently accurate explanation to gain full marks.
 (b) Most responses reviewed were of a satisfactory to good standard (levels 2/3). A few candidates failed to provide a final judgement – required when asked to 'evaluate'.
- Q5** Most candidates produced good answers in carrying out the SWOT analysis but most failed to achieve full marks as they failed to show excellent knowledge and understanding of the 4 elements of the SWOT analysis and the application to Well-Worth-It was not evident. In these longer response questions, candidates must read the question carefully to ensure the time taken to respond is reflective of the marks available.
- Q6** Most candidates accurately analysed the five phases of the consultancy process. Others provided an answer which lacked understanding and application in some phases and their analysis was weak.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit AS 2

Human Resource Services

Internal Assessment Overview

The standard of work produced for this unit was excellent with centres responding well to the support provided at Agreement Trials and online.

Most eCandidate Record Sheets (eCRS) were completed accurately, however, some centres did not record the level of support given to candidates. This information is extremely useful in the moderation process and where support has been given, candidates' marks should reflect this e.g., highest mark bands may not be awarded.

Centres must include the CCEA Sample Cover Sheet (as the top page for each Report), available on the CCEA website. This sheet must clearly identify the centre number, candidate number and the mark awarded. The marks on this Cover Sheet must match the marks submitted on the ECRS. All candidates must sign the Sample Cover Sheet and the coursework must be submitted in rank order of merit.

Unit Overview

Teacher's annotation on the reports and summative comments on the eCRS, made the moderation process significantly easier.

Candidates demonstrated extensive use of primary and secondary research methods to meet the assessment requirements. Primary research, collected through employee questionnaires and manager interviews, provided the necessary level of detail needed to complete the reports. Evidence of such primary research was usually included in the appendices and secondary research was carried out to a high standard, in most instances, with relevant evidence referenced throughout the reports. Candidates should include their primary (pre and post testing copies) and secondary research evidence in the appendices.

It was pleasing to note that most reports submitted by Centres followed the recommended 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 section was correctly 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.

Teachers should encourage candidates to adhere to the guideline word count of 3,500 - 4,000 words. Reports must be written in the third person. This is an important skill which is credited and those who do not write in the third person cannot access the highest marks for the Report section. A few candidates did not use the prescribed line spacing of 1.5, print on one side of A4 nor include page numbering. This reduces the marks they can access for Report Format and Structure. These requirements are clearly stated in the Internal Assessment document on the CCEA website. 4

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 in the report. Unfortunately, some candidates omitted an overview of the main issues and areas of concern identified within the Client Brief and consequently, were not able to reach the top mark in level 3. This was also the case for recommendations.

In the Introduction, candidates must clearly state 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 measures to be taken to ensure reliability and validity of the data collected. The method and size of the sample to be used for the primary research must also be included. Some candidates omitted reliability and validity, sample method and size from the reports, limiting the marks attainable. Most candidates addressed the testing of primary research however, those who failed to include details of this were unable to access top marks in Level 3. It was pleasing to see that most 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 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 and their research findings must be applied to the relevant Client Brief.

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. An evaluation of research methods used to conduct the research must also be included to access marks in Level 4. A level 4 mark must only be awarded if 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 are provided. 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.

For the Conclusion and Recommendations, candidates should remember 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 some. They must include relevant theory, models or concepts in order to support their conclusions and recommendations. 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 include an updated organisational structure in line with their proposed recommendations for Your Cuisine Ltd.

Most candidates included a Bibliography, however, some failed to use the Harvard Referencing System, a requirement of this unit.

All centres should have a representative at the Agreement Trial for this unit of work to ensure full understanding of assessment arrangements for the summer 2024 series.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 3

Financial Decision Making

Unit Overview

Most candidates demonstrated good financial competency, knowledge and understanding of financial calculations in their responses.

- Q1**
- (a)** Most candidates explained the term financial decision making. Some answers lacked the detail required to gain the second mark available.
 - (b)** Most candidates explained the three types of budget (raw material, production, and master). Some answers lacked enough detail to gain the second mark whilst others repeated the same definition for each budget which was not worthy of credit.
 - (c)** Several candidates were unable to explain one advantage and one disadvantage for Martin using disposal of assets as an internal financial resource and failed to relate it to High Flying Ltd.
 - (d)** Responses to this question were disappointing. Most candidates were unable to evaluate the appropriateness of hire purchase as the chosen external financial resource and their answers lacked detail, limiting the marks accessible. In addition, many did not provide the required, justified conclusion.
- Q2**
- (a)** A good number of candidates were able to define the term cash flow. Some appeared to be confused, referring to profit in their response.
 - (b)** Most candidates successfully calculated the cash flow forecast using the information provided. Some had incorrect outcomes but did follow the correct calculation. In these instances, examiners applied the own figure rule (OFR) to award some marks.
 - (c)** Candidates made a good attempt to analyse the closing bank balance figures for October and November, using their calculations in Part (b). Again, the own figure rule (OFR) was applied to this response where necessary.
 - (d)** This question saw disappointing responses from many candidates who appeared to have misunderstood the question. The majority provided analysis assuming High Flying Ltd were going to invest. This lacked the requirement of the question, to use financial data to make a decision on investing. Some candidates did obtain a good/excellent levelled mark.
- Q3**
- (a)**
 - (i)** Almost all candidates calculated the Net Profit Margin ratios for 2021 and 2022 using the financial data provided. However, some failed to include the percentage sign (%) in their last answer which prevented them from gaining the second mark for each response.
 - (ii)** Candidates made a good attempt to use the outcomes for the Net Profit Margin ratio, calculated in Part (a)(i) to analyse one financial decision that Martin may have needed to consider. The own figure rule was also applied to this response when necessary.

- (b) (i)** Almost all candidates calculated the Current Ratios for 2021 and 2022 using the financial data provided. However, some failed to include: 1 in their last answer which prevented them from gaining the second mark for each response.
- (ii)** Most candidates made a good attempt to use the outcomes for the Current Ratio, calculated in Part (b)(i) to analyse one financial decision that Martin may have needed to consider. The own figure rule was applied to this response when necessary.
- (c)** Most candidates answered this question poorly. They did not clearly identify the benefits and limitations of ratio analysis for decision making in High Flying Ltd. Many attempted to evaluate their responses in a general way, and some confused their response with cash flow forecasting. Candidates, in some instances, did not provide a justified conclusion which was required to access the higher mark bands.

Candidates must read the 'information to candidates' on the front cover of the examination paper and note that the quality of written communication is a key element in several questions. Past papers and mark schemes are available on the website (www.ccea.org.uk) and are useful to assist candidates in becoming more familiar with question structure, practising examination techniques and time management for these external examinations.

Finally, teachers and candidates please note, this subject will be assessed in 2024 for AS Units using the new and updated specification, which can be found on the CCEA website.

A2 Subject Overview

The examining team was pleased with the quality of the written answers from the majority of candidates.

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 candidates to discuss or evaluate, a final judgement must be included. It is good practice for candidates to number the points being made, where relevant, in each answer. Candidates should read questions carefully and take note of command words.

Assessment Unit A2 1 Technology in Business

Unit Overview

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

- Q1** This question was well answered by most candidates. Weaker responses, tended to give a summary statement. To gain full marks the candidate needed to give an excellent explanation.
- Q2** Most candidates failed to describe in sufficient detail, how technology can support financial decision making in a business and only provided basic to good descriptions.
- Q3** Most candidates answered this well. Application to Desert Island Travel Services was very good and when evaluating the effectiveness of using email most candidates used the appropriate headings from the specification: Client Needs, Users, Time, Cost and Security. Some candidates simply provided the advantages and disadvantages of email when evaluating. Better responses included a good evaluation and provided a final judgement. Some appeared not to understand the command word 'evaluate' and consequently did not provide a final judgement. The more able candidates provided an in-depth evaluation. To gain top marks the candidates' evaluation of the effectiveness of email needed to be appropriate, clear, and logically based on a thorough analysis.
- Q4** **(c)** This question was answered satisfactorily by most however, a few could not identify or explain two principles of keeping data safe.
- (d)** Most candidates answered this well showing good knowledge and understanding of the main features of a disaster recovery plan. Better responses included an in-depth analysis and those awarded top marks, included a clear, logical and thorough analysis of the main features of a disaster recovery plan.
- Q5** Responses to this question were generally poor, suggesting a significant lack of knowledge and understanding of the use of a cloud storage to store information. Application to Desert Island Travel Services was generally good, and some candidates provided a good evaluation with a final judgement. Again, the command word 'evaluate' did not elicit a final judgement in a few responses.
- Q6** Largely disappointing responses with some confusion around the social, moral, and ethical issues and application to Desert Island Travel Services and the digital divide.

Assessment Unit A2 2 Leadership and Management

Unit Overview

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

- Q1 (c)** Most candidates identified two advantages and two disadvantages. Some candidates confused autocratic leadership with other leadership styles, which was not credited.
- (d)** Most candidates were able to explain five roles in a team. Some candidates were unable to identify the exact term for each of the five roles but were credited with an appropriate explanation.
- Q2** Most candidates were able to explain Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence.
- Q3** Most candidates failed to show a good level of knowledge and understanding of the Blake Mouton Managerial Grid. To obtain full marks candidates were required to analyse their responses to Monaghan Housing Ltd.
- Q4** Some answers lacked sufficient analysis for effectively managing the change of leader in Monaghan Housing Ltd. Responses which did not relate to managing the change of owner, did not receive credit.
- Q5** Several candidates provided a sound analysis of the use of Kotter's 8-step Process Model to lead the change to address poor performance in Monaghan Housing Ltd. Most responses, demonstrated a good level of knowledge, understanding, application and analysis. Others lacked understanding and application of Kotter's 8-step Process Model and contained limited analysis.
- Q6** Most candidates provided very good responses and achieved a Level 4 mark, however, a significant number failed to achieve a Level 4 mark because they did not show either, sufficient application to Monaghan Housing Ltd or failed to give a final judgement.

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.

Examination preparation can include the use of past examination papers and their mark schemes. Candidates should be 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 2024 candidates to become familiar with the questioning techniques and time management for these external examinations.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit A2 3 Project Management Skills and Processes

Most centres closely followed CCEA's guidelines for this unit and submitted work of a good or particularly good standard.

Almost all centres completed eCandidate Record Sheets (eCRS) accurately however, as with the AS coursework, some did not record the level of assistance given on the eCRS making moderation slightly more challenging.

As stated above for the AS coursework, the CCEA Sample Cover Sheet must accompany all work requested for the sample and the marks on this cover sheet must match the marks that have been electronically submitted and the sample must be bagged in rank order of merit.

Unit Overview

The moderation process was enhanced by teacher annotation on the assignments and in summative comments recorded on the eCRS.

Candidates chose a varied range of projects which allowed for knowledge and understanding, application of knowledge and understanding, analysis and evaluation to all be addressed and to enable attainment of Level 3 marks.

While the quality of the work produced was excellent, centres should note 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 however, 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 Fundraising Committee), Project Supplier and the Project Manager.

A considerable number of candidates were able to identify and discuss the various key documents required for Project Management. Some candidates did not provide detail for each of the three areas (Stages (explanation and purpose), Roles (description) and Key Documents (purpose and contents)) in this task.

Task 2 (Project Initiation) AO2 and AO3: was completed to a high standard and candidates used a variety of sources to conduct primary and secondary research to produce the required Business Case, including three options, investigated before selecting the final option for the project. In some cases, the discussion and analysis of research findings lacked detail. A few candidates did not provide enough detail in elements of the Business Case e.g., the risks associated with each of the three options. It was pleasing to see that the Project Brief was completed to a high standard by most candidates.

Task 3 (Project Planning) AO2 and AO3: addresses the planning of the project with most candidates using a Gantt Chart, however, some had limited detail. Candidates should record the time, activities and milestones which may affect the project on the Gantt Chart. Some candidates did not identify the milestones associated with their project and did not provide adequate detail for the Stage Review, nor did they include a thorough assessment of the reason to proceed with the project.

Task 4 (Project Execution, Closure and Evaluation) A02 and A03: had been grouped together by some centres to produce one presentation for the range of checks, report and registers, steps to close the project and evaluation questionnaires. The presentation was accompanied 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. Some candidates did not include the range of checks that would be used to review the progress of the project and steps to close the project, a requirement of this task. A small number of candidates did not include the evaluation questionnaires required for the User, Client and Project Team nor a specific question to address where improvements might be made for a future project.

The recommended way to complete Task 4.1 is to identify and describe the range of checks (see below) followed by the reports and registers. Then, in Task 4.2, a discussion of the steps to close (see below) the project should be followed up with the evaluation questionnaires for the Client, User and Project Team.

The recommended range of Checks include:

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

The recommended Steps to Close the project 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

Most candidates included a suitable bibliography for Task 2. Some opted to insert this at the end of the assignment while others placed it at the end of Task 2. Either way was accepted.

All centres should attend the Agreement Trial for this unit to confirm their understanding of the standard being applied and the assessment arrangements for the Summer 2024 series.

Contact details

The following information provides contact details for key staff members:

- **Specification Support Officer: Arlene Ashfield**
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, extension: 2291, email: aashfield@ccea.org.uk)
- **Officer with Subject Responsibility: Peter Davidson**
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, extension: 2993, email: pdavidson@ccea.org.uk)

