

Applied Business

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J213**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Double Award) **J226**

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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Overview

For candidates who commenced a two-year programme in September 2011, centres are reminded to take into consideration the terminal rule when planning delivery models and entering candidates for examinations and external moderation. Candidates must take at least 40% of the assessment in the same series they enter for either the single award or double award qualification certification, ie one unit for the single award and two units for the double award. Units can be taken in any order as long as the terminal rules are satisfied. This terminal rule does have implications on delivery, particularly in the way in which the double award is delivered (see Specification page 48 and Teacher's Handbook, page 4).

Another area for consideration is the use of re-sits as an opportunity for candidates to improve assessment outcomes. Whilst candidates can re-sit each unit once before entering for certification, centres need to consider the logistical implications of re-sitting both internally and externally assessed units. If a re-sit is used to satisfy the terminal rule, this re-sit result will count towards aggregation, even if it results in a lower mark than the original result (see Teacher's Handbook, pages 4 and 7).

A242 and A244

With regards to the Controlled Assessment tasks (see Guide to Controlled Assessment, pages 8, 9 and 10), centres are reminded that during the write up (Unit A242 Tasks 1, 3, 4 and 5 and Unit A244 Tasks 2, 3, 4 and 5) candidates should only have access to their personal research notes which they have made during the research phase of task taking (Unit A242 Task 2 and Unit A244 Task 1). It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that these are only research notes and that they do not include a draft or final version of the tasks. During the write up candidates must not have access to internet/intranet, email or mobile phone. A breakdown of time limits is contained in the Controlled Assessment tasks for A242 and A244. If a candidate is absent when an assessment is carried out, the Controlled Assessment task may be sat at an alternative time provided that the centre is satisfied that security has been maintained by keeping all materials secure. The teacher may give appropriate support and guidance to the candidates during the research phase but verbal and written feedback are not permitted during the write-up phase.

A241 and A243

Centres appear to be using the range of resources available. In this series, more candidates have written their responses in context. Candidates had been well prepared with theoretical knowledge of the units. However, some needed to develop their examination technique and apply their answers to the scenario and also, in the case of unit A241, to a business which they have studied. For unit A241, when questions ask candidates to respond using a business which they have studied, they must apply their answers to the selected business. It is not sufficient merely to name the business and provide a theoretical response.

Centres are reminded that calculators are allowed in both examinations. Candidates will be disadvantaged if they do not have access to a calculator, particularly when carrying out calculations within unit A243. Centres must ensure that all candidates are suitably equipped with a pen and a calculator. When candidates cross out a response and insert a revised answer, it must be clear to the examiner which response should be marked. Centres must ensure that the responses of their candidates are legible. Increasingly, there are scripts which are difficult to decipher as a result of the poor handwriting.

A241 and A244

Centres should note that the Equality Act 2010 is now in place. The Equality Act supersedes all of the following pieces of equal opportunities legislation: The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations, Disability Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act. From the January 2013 series candidates will be assessed on the new legislation. A notice to this effect can be found on OCR's website.

A241 Business in Action

General Comments

As always candidates who had been fully prepared for the examination generally performed well. Responses indicated a good level of understanding and demonstrated that the candidates could apply the subject matter in context.

Questions for this unit will either be purely theoretical, applied to the business given in the texts within the question paper itself, applied to a business such as, or applied to a business which the candidate has studied. The introductory texts need to be read very carefully by the candidates and used as appropriate when answering the questions. The texts put the business, in this case Orion Designs, in context and give candidates invaluable information which allowed them to apply their answers and enabled them to access higher levels of the mark scheme.

When a question asks the candidate about a business which they have studied their answer must clearly relate to that particular business. It is not sufficient to simply write the name of the business and state the activity of the business then write a general, possibly theoretical answer. This was the second series where candidates were asked to state the activity of the business. This was designed to help them to focus on what their business actually does and then to apply their answer.

Some candidates, when identifying a business which they had studied, had obviously learned a lot about their chosen business, and were able to relate their findings to the questions on the paper, but quite a few seemed to have limited understanding of how their chosen business actually operated.

In this examination, the 10 mark questions related to the case study business. This was the second series where candidates were able to access Level 2 by demonstrating application of knowledge (not necessarily in context). They scored a maximum of four marks if their answer was applied knowledge in theory rather than in the context of Orion Designs. This method will continue in future series.

Questions asking candidates to explain a way or a reason are generally marked on a one plus one mark basis. This means that the first mark is awarded for stating or identifying the way or reason. The second mark is for developing that reason (in context if that is what is required by the question). It was pleasing to see that a smaller number of candidates than in previous sessions stated two or three different reasons rather than developing one of them. Just stating two or three different reasons limits the candidate to a maximum of half marks on such questions because they are not developing their reasons.

Within the specification there are easily identifiable aspects where evaluation questions can be asked. Some of these areas include reference to a business which the candidate has studied and some do not. Careful study of the specification will enable centres to plan their visits to businesses to their advantage. The use of the centre as a business is not always beneficial to candidates. An approach to planning could be to select a business or case study to cover each aspect of the specification in which where 'a business candidates have studied' is been mentioned.

Answers presented for the longer written questions seemed to indicate that candidates had been well prepared. Teachers are clearly using past mark schemes and OCR resources to help candidates to appreciate how responses are marked should a level of response mark scheme apply. Many more candidates seem to be able to write in context and hence access higher marks.

The range of questions presented gave candidates of all abilities the opportunity to demonstrate understanding. The vast majority of papers showed that the candidates had at least attempted all of the questions posed. The questions suitably addressed all topics included in the specification and were a true test of ability. Extended answer questions gave higher ability candidates the opportunity to fully demonstrate understanding using application and context. Candidates of all ability ranges were able to write at length on each of the 10 mark questions. The scenario set enabled candidates to apply their subject knowledge in an applied and realistic manner.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a)& (b) Both of these parts of the question were generally answered well and were a good introduction to the paper.
- 1 (c) Many responses to this part of the question indicated a lack of understanding of what is a deed of partnership and, therefore, many were unable to explain the need for one. Some candidates just explained the purpose of a deed of partnership.
- 1 (d) This part of the question was attempted by most candidates and generally showed good knowledge and usually applied. There was some confusion about unlimited and limited liability in some responses and also that a private limited company was a public limited company. Conclusions from more able candidates tended to be repetitive and, therefore, lacked evaluation. Most candidates could access Level 2 showing knowledge of all three forms of ownership.
- 1 (e) There were some good answers to this part of the question showing how beneficial and problematic each element would be; however, context was difficult to identify within many responses. The new competitors element was answered better as some candidates did not seem to understand the concept of increased consumer spending.
- 2 (a) Generally identified well although some candidates thought that functional areas were stakeholders, and also shareholders were given. Good explanations of interests were given but the development tended to be weak. The development marks were the differentiator, with some candidates continuing to give more interests of stakeholder rather than an explanation. Many candidates simply defined who was the stakeholder.
- 2 (b) (i) When candidates did not achieve marks on this part of the question it was this generally because of their poor choice of stakeholder groups which made it difficult to see two sides.
(ii) Impacts were well explained when the conflict was clear.
- 3 (a) This part of the question was well answered. The main error was putting database and spreadsheet in reverse order.
- 3 (b) Again this part of the question was generally well answered but many candidates put drinks next to the computer. The question referred to the health and safety needs of the employee.
- 3 (c) This part of the question was well answered by most candidates.
- 3 (d) Operations – clearly one of the functional areas which caused difficulty. Responses to this part of the question suggested that candidates did not have a confident hold on what this department does.

- 3 (e) Some candidates related this functional area to stock control and the work of customer service and finance. Most of them could identify that they are involved in the paperwork aspect of business but many answers were non-specific.
- 3 (f) This part of the question was well attempted by most candidates with some good explanations and analysis, but again conclusions lacked evaluation, mainly repeating content. The majority of candidates considered both options.
- 4 (a) Many responses to this part of the question referred to what the business could do to be enterprising, not the staff themselves. Answers involving standard work expectations, eg: be punctual, hard work where given by some candidates.
- 4 (b) Again this part of the question was well answered and most candidates who made good identifications; however, many of the developments did not relate to this correct aspect.
- 4 (c) Most candidates provided a correct response to this part of the question. The main error related to the law instead of a code.
- 4 (d) This part of the question was generally answered well but recycling and general energy saving were common in the answers. Some candidates still get confused between ethics and sustainability.
- 4 (e) Again this part of the question was well attempted. Many candidates took the view that the whole business would move to China, even to the point of relocation of employees and trading in China. Others saw the not acting in an ethical manner as the alternative of moving to China. Candidates were able to access Level 2 marks by showing understanding of issues relating risk and ethics. Knowledge of aspects in China was not needed but it was pleasing to see that a significant number of candidates were able to apply their perceived knowledge of industry in China to this part of the question. Again, the conclusions tended to lack evaluation.

A242 Making Your Mark in Business

General Comments

The aim of the A242 controlled assessment is for centres to find a local business which is similar to one of the five scenarios. The controlled assessment materials are available via OCR Interchange. Candidates must use one of the five scenarios provided by OCR. Work was moderated using all five scenarios. It is acceptable for candidates to use the actual names of their selected business and competitors within their work, rather than using the names within the scenarios. Candidates must ensure, however, that they follow the requirements of the chosen scenario. Scenario 3, for example, requires the candidates to recommend 'ideas of other products or services the business can offer both in its shops and through the Internet'. In the work of some candidates, the new products or services were not entirely clear.

Task 1 (AO2). Candidates must produce an action plan, addressing each of the bullet points within the task (2 hours allocated). Candidates would benefit from using a tabular format to design the action plan, clearly showing how each task will be approached. Candidates would also benefit from focussing the action plan on Task 2, ie to obtain information on target market needs and competitor activity in relation to the business scenario. Following Task 1, candidates should use the action plan as a working document. They may need to make changes to the original plan as the investigation progresses. In order to achieve Level 3, the action plan must be comprehensive and fit for purpose. Monitoring must take place, with changes being made and reasons being given for the changes. Candidates should indicate how the changes have impacted on other actions.

Task 2. This task is based on research and carries no marks. However, it was apparent from some of the work moderated that questionnaire design was weak and that limited secondary research had been undertaken. As a consequence, some candidates had minimal information on which to base their controlled assessment tasks. These weaknesses were reflected in the marks awarded. In the design of the questionnaire, it was helpful if candidates had an understanding of the marketing mix of the selected business. Primary research could also take the form of an interview with a member of staff, observations, visits, a focus group or acting as a mystery shopper. Primary and secondary research should focus on the marketing mix.

Task 3 (AO1). A brief introduction would be helpful stating which real business is being studied and which competitors are being investigated. Candidates are required to clearly identify and describe how the chosen business is currently meeting the needs of the target market. The current customers may not necessarily be the target market from the scenario and candidates should describe the target market the business actually has. There tended to be implied evidence but it needs to be more explicit in relation to what the business currently offers the target market. The final bullet point within the task requires the candidates to describe **two** ideas as to how the business could better meet the needs of its target market and be more successful than its competitors, making reference to the marketing mix. In order to achieve Level 3, candidates must suggest two relevant ideas for improvement, with explicit links to more than one aspect of the marketing mix. Candidates must describe how the ideas will impact on the target market. The two ideas must be based on findings from their research and may be derived from any aspect of the marketing mix: Scenario 1 (eg refurbishing salon, new product(s), price reduction); Scenario 3 (eg new products or services); Scenario 5 (eg new product(s), targeted promotion, price deals).

Task 3 (AO2). Candidates must present their research findings in appropriate formats in relation to both customers and competitors. The use of tables to compare products/services and prices is an effective technique. For Level 3, there should be accurate interpretation, with detailed coverage of both customers and competitors. Data should be presented in a variety of appropriate formats with supporting explanations, eg charts, graphs, tables, location maps. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Task 4 (AO1). For Level 2, candidates must provide a comprehensive description of the reasons **why** it is important for businesses to promote. Descriptions are enhanced by the use of a range of examples from businesses. Some candidates had described **how** rather than **why** businesses promote.

Task 4 (AO2). The item of promotional material must link to one of the ideas from Task 3, eg producing an item of promotional material for the new product idea. For Level 3, the item of promotional material should be clearly applied to the business, the target market and based on research. Some candidates had included a second copy of the promotional material which had been clearly annotated and cross-referenced to show how it was fit for purpose, particularly targeted to research outcomes and target market. Annotations could also show reasons for the choices made, eg font size, colours, images.

Task 4 (AO3). Candidates must address each of the three sections within the third bullet point. A frequent omission was section one – why your chosen item of promotional material is more appropriate than any other. Links to the target market need to be clear in the evaluation, including how the promotion will attract the target market. Evidence from research should support judgements. At Level 3, evaluation of costs may consider different ways of producing and distributing promotional material.

Task 5 (AO3). Candidates must use their action plans to address both bullet points within the task. Some candidates would benefit from using a range of criteria to reflect on the positive and negative aspects of their skills and teamwork. For Level 3, candidates are required to reflect on a range of skills, supported by the action plan. An in-depth evaluation is required of their own contribution and reflection on other group members' contributions, with strong and regular links to the action plan. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation. For Levels 2 and 3 candidates need to make links to their action plan. This could include reflecting on the process of creating an action plan and any benefits they derived from this process. They also need to reflect on the changes they made to the action plan and why they feel those changes were necessary. They may like to consider whether or not the changes were avoidable had they worked in a different way. Candidates also need to make judgements about their contribution to the group. Did they have a large or small impact on the group? Were they effective as a team player? What evidence is there for this? Did they take a leading role? Did they solve any issues? Candidates need to support the judgements they are making with examples.

A243 Working in Business

General Comments

This unit is well established. As with last summer there was a significant entry; therefore, the observations have some grounding and can be supported from evidence, but these will become more accurate as the entry further increases.

The content of this unit is wide in both its depth and breadth; therefore, it is important that candidates are particularly well prepared for this examination. Revision guides and practice at examination questions are an important part of the revision process for this unit.

Due to the depth and breadth of the specification, and as noted in the specification, not all aspects will necessarily be tested in each paper. The only constant will be the finance functional area which will take up about one quarter of the marks allocated in each paper. Neither will the aspects of the specification be in any particular sequence.

The use of a calculator is allowed and centres are recommended to urge their candidates to use one as this will assist in the accuracy of their calculations. These will inevitably take place in the finance area of the paper, but could also take place in other areas; for example, when candidates were asked to analyse some promotional data.

Centres should note that specific ICT applications such as spreadsheets and databases will be tested within this paper. Also, the upgrading of ICT equipment is a significant portion of the specification and this was linked to methods of production on this paper.

Centres still need to prepare candidates to effectively answer the longer questions which are assessed using level of response criteria which includes the candidates' quality of written communication. There is evidence that where centres have done this, the structure and style of candidate responses allowed the candidates to attain the higher marks. Candidates must be reminded to make good use of the stimulus material which is provided within the question paper either within the text boxes themselves or in the question stem. This information has been provided for the purpose of helping candidates to tackle questions requiring them to demonstrate the higher level skills of analysis, evaluation and supported judgement. Centres should be aware that the questions have been designed so that all candidates have an opportunity to demonstrate the Level 3 skills of analysis and evaluation. These questions will now be worth 8 marks.

Most candidates made an attempt at all the questions on the paper and there were some very full and competent answers. There was clear evidence that most centres are familiar with the specification and have prepared their candidates fully; however, some candidates had clearly entered the examination room without **pens** or **calculators**. Calculators are identified as required additional materials on the front of the question paper. Centres need to ensure that all candidates are suitably equipped to enable them to reach their highest potential.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) This part of the question was well answered.
- 1 (b) There was a mixed understanding by candidates and although most could use the organisational chart to give an example of span of control. Some candidates confused this term with that of chain of command.
- 1 (c) This part of the question was well answered.

- 1 (d) Candidates who understood the role of a director answered this part of the question well, eg long term planning. The main error was detailing tasks which were likely to be carried out by the Production Manager or Operatives.
- 1 (e) Candidates had a good knowledge of skills and personal qualities but qualifications tended to be too brief, either stating the level or subject, rather than both. Also, there were plenty of candidates who thought that qualifications such as GCSE would be sufficient level for a Production Director.
- 2 (a) This part of the question was well answered.
- 2 (b) This part of the question was also well answered.
- 2 (c) The advantages of market research were generally understood with a good proportion of the candidates able to explain why it is an advantage. The disadvantages were not as well answered by the candidates and many could not relate this to expanding to Europe OR stating it would be a waste of money if research showed that it would not be good idea to expand to Europe. The main correct disadvantages given were time consuming and expensive but few candidates were able to develop these points within the context.
- 2 (d) The use of a website to promote *Bertlyn Play Ltd* was well answered by most but not many candidates could relate this to European expansion so failed to access marks for application. Few candidates were aware of targeted mail shots and most alluded to general mail shots. Again the context of the European expansion of the business was ignored by many candidates.

Centres must be aware that as an applied specification candidates will be expected to relate their business knowledge and then apply this within their responses.

- 2 (e) This part of the question was poorly answered and only a small minority of candidates achieved more than four marks. This was because of a poor understanding of a press release. Very few candidates included the date and/or added a heading. These are items which are necessary on a press release. The question asked candidates to use the information and there was a need for some synthesising of the provided information by candidates. Far too often candidates included spurious information about James and Billy which would never have been included in a press release. However, there was some good artistic work!
- 3 (a) Candidates appeared to understand cash flow forecasts and this part of the question was well answered by the majority. They seem to have realised the trick of the opening and closing balance which is generally a stumbling block. The use of negative values seems to have thrown some candidates and centres might like to include examples of this scenario when teaching this section of the specification.
- 3 (b) Candidates who could see past the mechanics of creating a cash flow forecast and understand that it relates to liquidity performed well on this part of the question. The majority of candidates were able to pick figures from the cash flow forecast and identify trends over time. However, there were still large numbers of candidates who explained these trends in terms of profit and loss. This is an ongoing and common fault with candidates. However, of those who did understand, there was good interpretation of the cash flow forecast with trends being explained. Most responses showed very little analysis, even though most made a judgement which was not substantiated. Candidates must be taught to link their analysis implicitly to their judgement.

- 3 (c) It is obvious that a cheque is little used today and there were an amazing number of candidates did not write the amount in words. There were a surprising number who omitted 'pounds', thus making the cheque invalid as it read as pence. Even though cheques are not widely used in society, centres should remember that a cheque remains a part of the specification and that it, therefore, still needs to be included within the teaching and learning content of the course. The addition of a signature was another issue as most candidates did not leave it blank. The question explicitly stated that it was to be prepared for Amir Khan.
- 3 (d) Candidates showed generally good knowledge of methods of payment. The inclusion of a credit note, postal order and a payslip seen as the main errors on this part of the question, as well as repeating similar methods such as a credit transfer and/or a bank transfer.
- 3 (e) Candidates answered this part of the question relatively well, especially those who realised that Amir Khan was the signatory because of his position of responsibility and then the possible effects which might follow. It should be noted that some candidates focussed on the effect to the suppliers, when the question asked for this to be related to Bertlyn Play Ltd.
- 4 (a) This part of the question was well answered.
- 4 (b) Candidates crafted a variety of creative and correct responses to this part of the question, with those which were correct being able to generally access full marks. The main errors made by candidates were to link their responses to promotion/sales/marketing rather than to customer services as required by the question.
- 4 (c) Candidates generally understood the actions required and how many of the functional areas would need to be involved in the final solution. Where marks were low was when the form of compensation and the role of customer services had only been considered. Some candidates despite it being noted in the question focussed on the giving of an apology.
- 5 (a) There were a number of different types of production noted by candidates. Candidates were able to demonstrate application for job production, rather than batch production as they were not able to identify the need for large quantities of different sized axles.
- 5 (b) Candidates who understood the question were able to look at the advantages and disadvantages of the introduction of robots. The major error was that candidates had misunderstood the question and thought that the company was introducing a new toy! As with the other eight mark questions there were few Level 3 responses which showed any analysis and evaluation. Again, this is an aspect of the specification on which candidates need to focus if they are to access the higher levels of the mark scheme.

A244 Business and You

General Comments

The controlled assessment materials are available via OCR Interchange. Candidates must use one of the five scenarios provided by OCR. Work was moderated using all five scenarios.

Centres should note that The Equality Act 2010 is now in place. The Equality Act supersedes all of the following pieces of equal opportunities legislation: The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations, Disability Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act. From the January 2013 series, candidates will be assessed on this new legislation. A notice to this effect can be found on OCR's website.

Task 2 (AO1). Candidates must identify and describe the main activities of the human resources functional area. Candidates need to ensure that all four bullet points from page 35 of the unit specification have been covered in their descriptions. For Level 2, thorough descriptions of all four bullet points are required.

Task 2 (AO2). Centres are reminded that candidates must complete the application form provided by OCR and not re-create their own version. The application form should be supported by a CV and letter of application. For Level 3, the application documents must be fit for purpose, extremely focused and targeted on meeting the needs of the chosen job role. Candidates should match their skills, abilities and qualifications to the job description and person specification.

Task 2 (AO3). Candidates must produce a coherent and in-depth evaluation on why the application documents are fit for purpose and will result in an interview. Evidence must show strong levels of analysis and judgement of why the application pack will be successful. The evaluation must consider all three documents and why they are fit for purpose. Justification is required of why the application pack will be successful (or unsuccessful). There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Task 3 (AO1). For Level 2, a thorough description is required of what makes an effective interview process from the perspective of both the employee and the employer. Where candidates only focus on either the employee or the employer, marks are limited to Level 1.

Task 3 (AO2). Candidates must identify potential questions which would be asked by the interviewer and explain why each would be asked in relation to the specific job role. For Level 3, the interview questions must be extremely focused and targeted on the chosen job role; not generic questions. Detailed reasons why the questions are suitable for the interview for the specific job role are required.

Task 3 (AO3). Candidates have previously been required to evaluate how the five laws outlined on page 36 of the unit specification impact on the recruitment and selection process for their selected job role. Candidates need to avoid generic explanations of how legislation impacts on the recruitment and selection process. They must link to their chosen job role. However, from the January 2013 examination series, candidates will be assessed on The Equality Act 2010.

Task 4 (AO1). Candidates must produce an induction programme suitable for a new employee and not merely describe the induction process. For Level 2, all the key features should be covered including content, activities, timings and venue.

Task 5 (AO2). Candidates must produce a training programme with supporting explanations and not merely provide a description. The training programme must clearly show the key features which will equip the employee with the added skills and competencies needed for a more supervisory job role. The training programme must focus on the role of a supervisor including methods for learning, the skills required for the role, duration of training, venue and costs involved.

Task 5 (AO3). Candidates must assess how day-to-day activities may change in a more supervisory role. For Level 3, evidence must show an in-depth analysis of how skills may change in the supervisory role. Judgements are required. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

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