

GCSE

Business Studies

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J253**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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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.

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A291 Marketing and Enterprise

General Comments

The work presented for moderation this year maintained the standard seen in previous series. Candidate numbers showed an increase on 2013.

The two scenarios within the assessment, a paintballing centre and a pet grooming business, presented no real problems for centres regarding research and meeting the Assessment Objectives (AOs). The paintballing option was the most popular amongst centres/candidates.

Knowledge (AO1) was generally dealt with well, though understanding at times needed more development. Application remains a problem for many candidates who fail to recognise the detail within the scenario which they had been given. Analysis and evaluation (AO3) were dealt with well by more able candidates and remain a good discriminator between candidates at higher levels.

Application of the Assessment Objectives

AO1

As stated above, knowledge was the most accessible of the three AOs. Candidates were generally well aware of the different pricing strategies which Stuart might use in his paintballing business and the promotional strategies which Bethan might use in her pet grooming enterprise. Candidates should ensure that they show that they fully understand each part of the specification on which they are commenting. A simple definition will not gain full AO1 marks. The understanding of product mix was good, although a minority of the candidates confused this with the marketing mix.

Two elements within the specification were assessed for the first time; risk and reward for entrepreneurs and test markets. The rewards available to an entrepreneur were well understood, along with the potential benefits. Many candidates understood the general concept of a test market but were not clear on its application (see below).

AO2

This AO carries the highest marks within the assessment and should, therefore, be fully understood by candidates. While there is evidence of generic application, many candidates still ignore the detail of the scenario and the importance of placing the investigation in the local area.

For Stuart and his paintballing business, candidates were informed that he is 22 years old, has some capital, and access to some farm land. He has no experience of running a business. In investigation 1, the candidates were quick to point out deficiencies within his market research, and were often able to propose questions which were rather better targeted than those suggested in the scenario. Candidates were less likely to look at Stuart's position and suggest an approach to market research which would be suitable for him.

In investigation 2, the candidates were asked to recommend a pricing strategy for Stuart to use. Candidates often gave an advantage of, say, penetration pricing (which should help Stuart to win customers from competitors) and took this to cover application as it mentioned Stuart. Whilst the point made was not wrong, candidates should take Stuarts position and apply that to their work (Stuart would have to consider penetration pricing as he is new to the market and so has to win customers from existing businesses). How might the fact that Stuart has some capital impact on his pricing strategy? Could he afford to engage in penetration pricing for a long time?

The local area should also be considered. A minority of the candidates clearly identified the number and location of competitors (which may be other paintball centres or indirect competitors such as leisure centres) by using maps of an appropriate scale. Clearly, if there were a large number of competitors close by the local area that would have a significant effect on the choice of pricing strategies. If there were no competitors at all, then Stuart would have a wider choice of pricing strategies which may help his business.

The product mix was covered rather better by the candidates who looked to other paintball businesses to help them understand the breadth of products and services on offer. Again, Stuart's circumstances should have been borne in mind. With his capital could he consider a larger range of services; perhaps a little more upmarket than others? If competition is fierce is there a minimum level of service which he would have to provide simply to be competitive?

Test markets, though understood, were not really well applied within candidates' work. Most of the candidates thought that a test market was relevant to Stuart as it would save him money. What candidates failed to consider was the business in question. A paintballing centre would have to be built in order to test the idea fully. Is this realistic for Stuart?

In the case of Bethan, investigation 1 was completed well, with the candidates applying the data in the scenario to Bethan and her situation.

In investigation 2, the promotion was at times rather generic in approach. As with Stuart, the candidates needed to understand the detail of Bethan. She, too, is 22 years old, though she has no money to help her develop the business. Given the lack of money, what type of promotion could she consider? The business is only local, so any advertising outside the local area was not really applicable. Maps showing the location and nature of competitors would again have been useful in helping to understand how Bethan might compete, in a marketing sense, with other businesses – given her circumstances.

At times the promotion suggestions for Bethan were applicable; television, for example, being too expensive and would cover too wide an area. Billboards were wrongly put forward by a number of candidates for advertising; showing how little was understood about the nature of a new, small business advertising for an entrepreneur with little capital.

The product mix for Bethan was approached well, with the candidates generally applying the possible products and services which Bethan might offer to her particular position. The help and advice available to entrepreneurs was at times very well done with both local and national help and advice being covered. Bethan, at 22 years old, should have prompted rather more candidates to look at age related support.

It is vital for AO2 marks that the candidates constantly look back to the detail of the scenario and the local area when considering any proposal in any investigation. Comments such as 'advertising in newspapers would be good for Bethan as many people read newspapers' are rather too generic and need to be specific to the investigation being undertaken.

AO3

Candidates in investigation 1 made a good attempt at analysing the data and make recommendations. At times rather too much time was spent on this investigation, given the 10 marks available. A number of candidates in Stuart's paintballing investigation conducted separate research of their own which was then analysed. Centres are reminded that there is no requirement in investigation 1 for any additional research to be undertaken.

In investigations 2 and 3 however, there is a need to collect primary and secondary data to place the investigation in a local context. Most candidates undertook some aspect of secondary research, looking at the potential competitors which Stuart and Bethan would face. A number of candidates did not undertake any primary research which then limited the data for analysis which, in turn, meant that there was less data to justify any ideas being put forward.

It is important that data collection be well targeted. Asking local consumers how much they would pay for a paintballing session gives an indication of a price to charge rather than a pricing *strategy*. Asking people if they would be willing to pay a higher price for a new paintballing centre if it provided superior facilities, would give evidence to support, or not, the use of skimming. When investigating promotional activities for Bethan, the candidates should have investigated where local consumers would look if they wanted a pet grooming service, and what sales promotion would be most likely to persuade them to use a newly opened business. All these elements still need to fit the scenario. It is the case that most consumers watch advertisements on television. Although this does not mean that television advertisements are suitable for all businesses because they reach most people.

The analysis of the data should be thorough. It helps moderation if the graphs and analysis are together in the body of the work and not in the appendices. This will also prompt candidates to analyse their graphed data (the graphs being completed in the 10 hours research stage). Candidates should use figures/percentages when analysing to add detail into their work. For higher marks in AO3 it is vital that the analysed data is fully utilised to justify the recommendations being made.

A number of candidates in both the paintballing and pet grooming investigations failed to complete the 'change over time' element in pricing or promotion. This had a negative impact on AO3 and to some extent AO2.

Centres are reminded that option 1 for entries is the OCR repository, where work is uploaded for moderation. Option 2 is for postal moderation.

A292 Business and People

General Comments

There were approximately 12000 candidates who sat this examination paper during this June session. The standard of the scripts varied markedly with nearly 1000 students obtaining 50 or more of the 60 marks on offer and only 100 candidates obtaining 10 or less marks on offer. It was evident that the scripts were of a higher quality than in previous series and, as a result, the mean mark significantly increased to 37 from 33. Given the end to the modular system, this increase in the mean score was expected as there were markedly more year 11 candidates who sat the examination.

Many candidates displayed an excellent knowledge of the specification content and outstanding scripts were seen. However, there were other scripts which displayed major gaps in knowledge and understanding, and it seemed apparent that some candidates were not well prepared. Aspects which caused difficulty related to questions 1(c)(ii), 1(d)(i), and 2(a)(ii). These surprisingly tended to be knowledge based, e.g., the meaning of the terms 'lateral integration', and 'incorporation'.

As expected only the more able could fully analyse and evaluate. These candidates provided good responses to questions 1(f), 2(c) and 2(g). The latter questions were targeted at the higher end and differentiated as such.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

- A**
- (i) This part of the question was well answered. The vast majority of the candidates could correctly select the two features of a sole trader namely 'unlimited liability' and 'one owner'.
 - (ii) This part of the question was generally well answered with over three quarters of the candidates obtaining two or more of the four marks on offer. The reason for a lack of candidates achieving all four marks was that many candidates did not compare their 'reasons to operate as a sole proprietor' to reasons not to operate as a partnership. As a consequence, these candidates obtained two marks.

Correct responses included 'Leroy keeps all of the profit and does not have to share with partners', and 'Leroy makes all the decisions, whereas he would have to discuss with his partners if he were in a partnership'.

- B** This part of the question was well answered. The vast majority of candidates, over three quarters, could state two possible stakeholders of a business and obtained at least two of the three marks on offer. For some candidates explaining a possible conflict between the two of 'their' stakeholders proved difficult.

Correct responses for company stakeholders included customers and owners. A correct 'conflict' included 'customers may want the cheapest price, but the owners will want the highest price so as to maximise profit'. A frequent incorrect response 'competitors' was not awarded.

- C**
- (i) This part of the question was well answered. Over three quarters of the candidates could state a way of measuring growth and thereby obtaining the one mark available. Most frequent correct answers included 'profit', and 'sales'

- (ii) This part of the question was poorly answered. About one third of the candidates obtained none of the three marks on offer. Responses which provided general answers such as 'business will work better' were not rewarded.

Correct but rare responses included 'If you do not think carefully about a business' internal organisation then some employees do not know who to report to and as a result communication will be slow and workers are not efficient in the job'.

- D (i) This part of the question was satisfactorily answered. Nearly two thirds of the candidates could partially explain the meaning of the term 'lateral integration' with reference to 'joining with another business'. As expected only a small proportion of the candidates could define the term in full. This part of the question was aimed at the more able.

A correct two mark response included the one outlined in the mark scheme namely 'Lateral integration takes place when two businesses join together which have related but not competing goods, e.g. a sports clothing shop integrating with a sports shoe shop'.

This part of the question, again, highlighted the importance of using the **subject guidance notes** when covering the specification and not the OCR textbook.

- (ii) This part of the question was well answered. The majority of the candidates could explain one advantage of 'integrating with another business' and, therefore, obtain both the marks on offer. Over three quarters of the candidates could obtain at least one mark. For some candidates explaining the 'advantage' they had correctly chosen proved difficult.

Correct answers included 'joining with another business means that Trendy is not in competition with that business and, therefore, it will make higher profits'.

- E This part of the question was well answered. The majority of candidates, nearly two thirds, could achieve two or three of the marks on offer by explaining why businesses may prefer to operate as a private limited company than a sole proprietor. Candidates tended to lose a mark for not explicitly comparing a private limited company to a sole proprietor. Correct answers included 'Owners have limited liability which means that the owners' personal assets are not at risk, whereas with a sole proprietor they could lose everything'.

- F This part of the question was answered as expected with an appropriate 'normal distribution' of marks. Over two thirds of candidates could obtain Level 2 and achieved at least three of the six marks on offer by explaining an advantage or disadvantage of 'fringe benefits' or 'profit share'. The more able candidates could analyse and provide a reasoned judgement as to which is a better method of motivation'.

An example of a good response included 'Fringe benefits are things such as company cars. Using fringe benefits is good as it is likely to cost less to the business than giving a share of the profits to its workers, although it may only motivate the individual. A profit share scheme may not be that motivational as it depends on the percentage given by the owners, as if it is a lot workers may work really hard. In summary, I would choose fringe benefits as the cost would be less'.

- G Both parts of this question were targeted at the grades F and G. As a consequence nearly all of the candidates could obtain each of the two marks on offer. The loss of a 'mark' tended to relate poor explanation as opposed to incorrect selection of training method.

Correct responses for training an individual 'for dealing with difficult questions' included, 'I would use role play as Jane can have someone pretend to be a difficult customer so you can practise how the company expect you to react'.

Correct responses for training an individual to use a 'photocopier' included, 'I would use demonstrations as Jane can easily be shown how the photocopier works'.

Question 2

- A**
- (i) This part of the question was well answered with nearly 90% of the candidates able to correctly select a feature of a public limited company namely 'shares are sold on the stock exchange'.
 - (ii) This part of the question was poorly answered with about two thirds of the candidates not obtaining any of the two marks on offer. It seemed apparent that many candidates had not learned the term 'incorporation', despite it being in the guidance notes. Rare correct responses included 'incorporation is when a new limited company is created. The incorporation process means that the individual owners are separate from the business'.
- B** This part of the question was well answered with over two thirds of the candidates able to obtain at least two of the four marks on offer. Over a quarter of the candidates achieved each of the four marks by explaining two location factors which a stated business may take into account. Correct responses included 'Four by Four plc makes cars so needs workers so must locate where there are likely to be workers', and 'Cheap rent will lower the costs and will maximise profits'. Reasons for a loss in marks related closely to the quality of the 'explanation'.
- C** This part of the question was generally well answered. Nearly two thirds of the candidates could obtain Level 2 and at least four of the six marks on offer by analysing a recruitment process, and making an appropriate judgement as to its appropriateness. Some of the responses were surprising in that many candidates thought that the process was a good way to recruit. The more able could analyse the data and accurately provide advantages and disadvantages of the recruitment process.

An example of a good response included 'I think the recruitment process is not good, although some parts are. The shortlisting of six of the 200 applicants saves time, and using group activities allows you to see if they are good as part of a team, and whether they can communicate effectively. However, what will Four by Four plc learn with only having a 10 minute interview? Also, having 15 employees from various levels on the interview panel is not good as there will be many different opinions and they are away from their work. Also, asking different questions means you cannot compare candidates' answers. Therefore, overall the recruitment procedure is poor as bad points far outweigh the good points'.

- D**
- (i) This part of the question was targeted at a G grade and as a consequence was well answered with virtually all of the candidates able to correctly analyse the graph provided and select 'Briefings at the beginning of each shift'.
 - (ii) This part of the question was well answered. Approximately two thirds of the candidates obtained each of the two marks on offer by explaining a disadvantage of a chosen method of communication. Correct responses tended to centre on email and included 'workers may not always check their email, therefore, they may not get message and so cannot do their job properly'.

- E** This part of the question was satisfactorily answered. Approximately two thirds of the candidates could obtain at least two of the four marks on offer by stating possible advantages of flexible working. Some candidates did not link the advantage to the business and as a result they lost marks. Correct responses included ‘Workers are less bored and, therefore, are more productive’, and ‘Flexible working may mean an increased number of employees working from home and the business can save on office space which increases profitability’.
- F** This part of the question was targeted at grades E, F, and G. As with other questions targeted at these candidates, the answers were good and nearly 90% of the candidates were able to obtain at least three of the marks on offer by correctly analysing the data provided and making an appropriate judgement regarding employee motivation. Common correct responses included ‘Complaints have gone down and productivity has increased which suggests that the workers are more motivated and work quicker and to a better standard’.
- G** This part of the question was satisfactorily answered which is in-line with previous responses on the topic of trade unions on previous A292 examination papers. Approximately half of the more able candidates could obtain Level 2 and at least four of the six marks on offer by explaining how possible industrial action may impact on a stated business. However, nearly one fifth of the candidates could not obtain one mark as they found difficulty with interpreting the headline. This was expected as the question was targeted at the more able. Many candidates could identify possible types of industrial action such as strike, work to rule and overtime ban. These candidates could then explain a possible effect on the business of one of these actions. Reasons for a lack of candidates achieving Level 3 included a lack of evaluation, e.g., how many of their employees were members of the union.

An example of a good response included ‘Industrial action may mean a strike which could be bad for Four by Four plc. However, it will depend on whether the business’ employees are members of the Transit Car union, and if so how many. The more members means the greater the impact in that there will be a loss of production. In the headline it states that industrial action is inevitable so there is likely to be an impact, although we do not know the type of industrial action, and this will also affect the consequences of the headline. If a strike, there will be a major impact on how many cars would be produced’.

A293 Production, Finance and the External Environment

General Comments

The examination was based on a pre-release case study. The context of the case study was a firm, Bowton Spice Bazaar (BSB), which manufactured spices. The case study appeared to be accessible to the vast majority of the candidates and there were indications that many centres had prepared their candidates in detail for anticipated questions. This led to a very good level of performance overall.

The examination was aimed at the full range of candidates from A* to G. Some questions were specifically designed to give an opportunity for the lower grade candidates to show what they could achieve, including some of the tick box questions. Those designed to provide an opportunity for the higher grade candidates to display their abilities were more open ended questions in which it was expected that the lower grade candidates might gain some credit. These questions were marked using a levels of response mark scheme. As last year, it is on the questions which are marked using a level of response mark scheme that there is the greatest scope for improvement by candidates. Level 1 is usually awarded for answers which show knowledge and, sometimes, also apply this to the business context. Given that this paper is based on a pre-release case study, most candidates automatically apply any knowledge which they have. Level 2 is for analysis. This is about developing knowledge and explaining implications or issues for a business. Level 3 is awarded for those answers which evaluate in context. Questions which assess evaluation require the candidates to make some kind of justified decision. The case study was written to highlight issues affecting BSB. The issues were included in the case study to give the candidates points which they could discuss which can be rewarded at L3. Candidates may also bring in relevant information from their own studies and from the real world to access the Level 3 band of marks. The tendency to conclude with the statements such as 'benefits outweigh disadvantages', was common again this year. This kind of statement does not represent evaluation.

Most candidates expressed themselves reasonably clearly. The use and spelling of specialist terms was generally very good. There were many scripts where the handwriting was very difficult to read. Examiners do their best to make sense of what has been written, but there are times when it is simply not possible to discern what has been written and no reward is given.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question One

- a) This part of the question which was designed as an introductory question to give encouragement to all of the candidates and it was generally answered very well.
- b) This part of the question was generally answered well. The most common error was the suggestion that the increase in VAT had increased the profits of the restaurant.
- c) It was evident that many candidates had an excellent knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of both buying and leasing and many scored at the top of the Level 2 band. These candidates should be encouraged to evaluate using the information provided in the case study. The answers which reached Level 3 used the information which had been provided in the case study to come to a conclusion as to whether buying with a mortgage or leasing the factory was the better option. There was no single, correct answer. The

reward was for a reasoned justification of the choice. Those candidates who argued in favour of buying the factory based their argument on the information that prices were low at the time when BSB was buying and this would put it in a position of possibly making a capital gain by the time BSB came to sell the property. Those in favour of leasing referred to the success of the business and its need to move to larger premises and explained that leasing, depending on the length of the contract, could provide the flexibility to move at minimum cost.

- d) i) This part of the question was generally answered correctly.
- ii) This pie-chart interpretation question which has featured regularly on this paper still discriminates very well between B and above candidates and lower grade candidates. The most common error is to state that the percentage share of sales changes, rather than doing the mathematical analysis required to find out how the value of the sales revenue changed. Good answers calculated the 2012 and 2013 revenue values and then the increase in the revenue value from one year to the next.
- e) i) This part of the question was generally answered correctly, although there were some candidates who did suggest that the market was a monopoly.
- ii) This part of the question was generally answered correctly.

Question Two

- a) i) The key to achieving a Level 3 answer on this part of the question was to relate batch production to the sales of spices by BSB. The case study made it clear that the spices were made to order. Batch production would enable BSB to switch production to meet these different orders as and when they were required and this would mean that BSB would not need to store large amounts of spices until a customer required them. While this response was elicited from a good number of candidates, many candidates restricted themselves to a justification based around the fact that BSB made a range of different spices, without stressing that they were made to order. This approach was rewarded at Level 2. Candidates were also required to explain why job and flow methods of production were not appropriate – the former because it involves individually made/ designed products, the latter because it involves constant production on an assembly line. Some candidates restricted themselves to describing the different methods of production, without applying the answer to the case in question. This approach was rewarded as a Level 1 response. A minority of the candidates seemed to have misinterpreted the question and wrote about how the different methods would affect the motivation of workers. It is possible that this would have some relevance on the type of the production method used, but no credit was given for this line of answer unless there was a clear reference to the nature of the work and the business needs of BSB.
- ii) This part of the question was answered well generally. Some candidates did not answer the question posed; they referred, for example, to the room, not the worker or the process which the worker was completing.
- iii) This part of the question was answered well by the majority of candidates.
- b) i) This part of the question was answered well generally.
- ii) This part of the question was answered less well than part (b) (i). The most common correct response was mortgage payments which was an indication that the candidates were drawing well on (CLOSE UP!) the case study information. Other common, correct answers were interest on loans and salaries.

- c) iii) There were a lot of poor answers to this part of the question. Diagrams were often inaccurate, untidy and inappropriately labelled.
- iv) This part of the question was answered correctly more often than responses to part (c) = (iii) might have suggested would be the case. It is possible that some candidates remembered that 5000 was the break-even output from the work undertaken by way of preparation for this examination.
- v) Whilst a good number of candidates answered correctly there were a large number of candidates who gave incorrect answers. A wide range of, often inappropriate, methods were used to come up with an answer. It was possible to calculate the answer from an accurately drawn break-even graph or from the data provided in the case study.
- vi) There were a lot of vague answers to this part of the question. Many candidates restricted themselves to Level 1 by discussing only the possible uses of break-even analysis to a business. Access to Level 2 marks was for discussing the potential limitations of break-even analysis. The simplest way to gain a mark at Level 2 was to identify that break-even analysis is an estimate or forecast based on assumptions. Better answers developed this approach by discussing the nature of the assumptions and the changes which could occur related to sales, prices and production costs.

Question Three

- a) i) Whilst the majority of candidates answered this part of the question correctly, there was a significant minority who did not.
- ii) This part of the question was answered well with the candidates citing imports, exports and the international research conducted by Chloe as examples of globalisation. No additional credit was given to answers which gave different sources of imports.
- b) i) On the whole, candidates were able to perform the calculation required to answer this part of the question correctly. A surprisingly large number, however, did not give a response to this part of the question.
- ii) The comments made in relation to part (b) (i) also apply to this part of the question.
- iii) As with other level of response/evaluation questions, the case study was written to include information include could be used to support reasoned judgements which would provide an answer to the question. Many candidates contented themselves with raising the issues which should be considered, eg covering costs or reducing profitability. The better answers built on the information in the case, eg that BSB had a good reputation for high quality spices which might help it to be able to raise the price to deal with the problem, while others stressed the fact that the market was competitive. Other candidates discussed the problem of getting high quality and reliable supplies of spices. One very clever argument used the information about the change in the exchange rate to indicate that this might offset the rise in the prices. Another approach which was credited at Level 3 identified further information which would have been useful to have, for example, how much the price had risen by, how competitors would response and so on.
- c) Questions on economies of scale have often caused problems for candidates and they did so again this year. In part (i) the candidates often suggested that total costs rather than average costs fall. Often total costs rise as the scale of production is increased. In part (ii) managerial and technical economies were often identified correctly, but a significant proportion of the (RUN ON) candidates struggled to distinguish between financial, marketing and bulk-buying economies.

- d) This was another level of response marked answer which, like the others, was set up so that the candidates could draw on information provided in the case study and to use this to come to a conclusion as to whether or not the planning permission should be granted. It was clear that many candidates had excellent knowledge of the external costs and benefits of production activities and many were able to state these and to explain why they would result in this case. The statement that benefits outweigh disadvantages is not enough to access level 3 marks. A discussion was required about what factors would make either the benefits or the costs more significant for the decision-making process. Those candidates who did access these marks wrote about the recession which had occurred in the town and how the jobs would help to deal with the problems the recession had caused. A small number of outstanding answers discussed the relevance of how many jobs would be created and if they would be given to local people. Another approach was to focus on the location of the factory on the outskirts of the town leading to discussions about the extent to which air and noise pollution, for example, would affect the people in the town. Other candidates posed questions about the size of the factory.

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