

**GCE**

**Economics**

Advanced GCE **A2 H461**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H061**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2016**

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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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## F581 Markets in Action

### General Comments

Candidates performed well in the examination as would be expected in the whole-entry re-sit scenario. The level of skills demonstrated was higher than in past years. The essay question on tradable permits was highly accessible to most candidates and a larger proportion of answers than in previous years accessed Level 4, showing evaluative skill. Credit is due to both candidates and teachers for effectively building on their previous experience.

### Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) A wide variety of approaches was taken by candidates and the mark scheme accommodated this diversity.

1(b) Many candidates provided an answer focused on the market's adjustment to equilibrium, but a surprising number sought to resolve the situation of excess supply by shifting the supply curve to the right rather than explaining how firms in the market might respond by moving down their supply curve-

1(c) This was well answered by the great majority of candidates.

2(a) Nearly all candidates stated the formula correctly and there was a marked increase of confidence in handling the concept of income elasticity of demand.

2(b) The calculation was completed successfully by the majority of candidates.

2(c) The question required reference to Figure 1 and candidates offered a range of treatments of the data. Mere repetition was not rewarded but most candidates performed additional calculations of PED or YED and received credit for this, then accessing the next level. The comment marks allowed for a measure of positive rewarding of candidates who were able to go further in their interpretation. Interestingly, positive figures for PED made an appearance in the data; some candidates handled this anomaly with aplomb.

3(a) Providing an accurate definition proved a challenging task for candidates and, once again, the markscheme sought to accommodate different approaches.

3(b) This question elicited the full range of marks, though most candidates were able to show the PPC moving inwards in response to the information given.

4(a) After some years of practice on comparable questions, the majority of candidates were able to provide a crisp and clear answer.

4(b) Again, familiarity with the format produced a general sense of purpose, though few candidates managed to follow through their examples with sufficient organisation to score full marks.

5 Those candidates who clearly understood the question produced some very good answers, often accessing 5 or 6 marks. A number addressed the solution of the problem of pollution rather than information failure, and so were unable to access the higher marks available.

6 A question on cap and trade had not previously been asked but candidates seemed well prepared nonetheless. The markscheme recognised two approaches. Some candidates analysed and evaluated how cap and trade solved market failure, while others analysed and evaluated how cap and trade works. Either route was able to score strong candidates up to 15 marks. The highest marks were awarded to those candidates who were able to explain and evaluate both aspects.

## **F582 The National and International Economy**

### **General Comments**

A few candidates did not attempt one or both of the questions which required numerical calculations but the vast majority of candidates attempted all the questions. There was good use made of the time available and there was little evidence of candidates running out of time.

As in previous sessions, there was good use made of aggregate demand and aggregate supply analysis. Candidates applied this in a relevant way in a number of their answers and the diagrams included were, in the main, accurate and appropriately labelled.

The strongest performance on the paper tended to be on the two 'comment' questions where a relatively high proportion of candidates included some good and relevant economics in their answers. They made clear and logical links. On these questions, however, and on some of the others, a number of candidates did not read the questions carefully enough. A number of candidates also did not examine the case study in sufficient detail.

The extent to which candidates provided relevant analysis on the last question varied considerably. This influenced their ability to provide pertinent evaluation.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

Most candidates did make good use of the information in the case study to answer the question. Some candidates, however, identified two policy measures that were not based on information from the case study.

#### **Question No.2(a)**

Some candidates wrote about the disadvantages of measuring unemployment through the use of the claimant count rather than through the use of the Labour Force Survey. The two most popular disadvantages described by those candidates who did correctly focus on the Labour Force Survey were unreliable information arising from sampling errors and the time involved in carrying out the survey and processing the information.

#### **Question No.2(b)**

A relatively high proportion of candidates calculated the figure accurately. Some candidates, however, made a miscalculation. It is important that candidates should have some idea of what would be a realistic figure. For example, some candidates gave as their answer, for instance, 33 million. This figure is the difference in the size of Japan's and the UK's labour force. Candidates should have some idea that unemployment would not be 33 million more in Japan than in the UK.

#### **Question No.2(c)(i)**

This was generally well answered with most candidates picking up on the incentive effect.

#### **Question No.2(c)(ii)**

There was a mixed performance on this question. Some candidates did analyse how a cut in the amount paid in benefits to the unemployed could result in people losing their jobs. These answers made good use of links to and from aggregate demand. Other candidates lost focus and concentrated instead on why those unemployed might remain unemployed.

Question No.3(a)

Most candidates recognised that an increase in costs of production would shift the aggregate supply curve to the left. A small proportion of candidates mentioned that it would shift it to the right or wrote about the effect on the aggregate demand curve.

Question No.3(b)

What distinguished candidates' answers to this question was the depth of the explanations provided. Some candidates just mentioned that the policy measures would increase productive capacity without establishing why. Other candidates established the links between the policy measures and productive capacity. These candidates, for example, explored how a cut in corporation tax might result in firms investing more which would increase the firms' capital goods and so their ability to purchase more goods and services.

Question No.4(a)

The key here was to recognise that between 2008 and 2012 fewer Japanese yen were required to purchase a US dollar and so the Japanese yen had increased over the period. Those candidates that did understand that the Japanese yen had appreciated produced good answers. They linked the change in value to aggregate demand via the price and quantity demanded of exports and imports. Some of those who misinterpreted the information did show an awareness of net exports being a component of aggregate demand.

Question No.4(b)

There were some interesting answers produced to this question. Some made some perceptive comments on how both consumer expenditure and investment might be influenced by a reduction in the rate of interest and how these changes might impact on imports and exports. There were also some good comments on how the exchange rate and so net exports might be influenced by a reduction in the rate of interest. Some candidates, however, seemed to think that portfolio and foreign direct investment appear in the current account of the balance of payments rather than the primary income they give rise to. A relatively high number of candidates also ignored the wording of the question that referred to 'a large and sustained reduction in the rate of interest'. They wrote that the effect of the interest rate change would depend on the size and duration of the reduction.

Question No.5

Again there were some strong answers to this question. Some candidates explored in depth the effect of a decline in a country's output on government tax revenue and the ability and willingness of a government to spend. There were some interesting comments on why a government might decide to engage in expansionary fiscal policy to counter the reduction in output. Some candidates, however, seemed to think that the only possible cause of a decline in a country's output is a decrease in government spending and these candidates confused cause and effect. As with Q4b some candidates did not appear to notice the word 'large' in the question and mentioned that the outcome would depend on the size of the decline in the country's output.

Question No.6(a)

This was generally well answered. A small proportion of candidates did reveal some confusion. For example, some wrote that a similarity is that both GDP and real GDP are measures of economic growth whereas it is a *change* in real GDP that is a measure of economic growth. A number of candidates also wrote that a difference is that real GDP is net of taxation.

Question No.6(b)

This was quite well answered with many candidates accurately calculating the figure. A number of candidates, however, did not read the question or the case study sufficiently closely enough. These candidates sought to calculate the change in real GDP per head between 2012 and 2013. This was not what the question asked and it was also not possible to calculate as the population size at the end of 2013 was not given.

Question No.6(c)

Most candidates found this an accessible question and were able to write relatively long answers, making use of aggregate demand and aggregate supply diagrams. A relatively high proportion of candidates, however, asserted rather than explained points and some answers lacked focus. For instance, a number of answers stated that economic growth could result in inflation and illustrated demand-pull inflation on a diagram but did not explain why short-run economic growth might result in inflation. Some candidates based their answers on the effects of an increase in aggregate demand and lost focus on economic growth. For example, one candidate wrote 'It is dependent on the initial position of the economy because if they are operating at full capacity then an increase in aggregate demand would only cause inflation'. Such an approach failed to recognise that an increase in aggregate demand at full capacity is not economic growth. Other candidates sought to provide an answer on the advantages and disadvantages of supply-side policy measures. Some of these wrote that supply-side policy measures do not always increase aggregate supply – again not focusing on the question.

As mentioned in previous reports, some candidates seem to think that economic growth can result only from changes in government policy measures. Those candidates who recognised that there are a range of possible causes of economic growth, including for instance innovation and higher consumer spending resulting from increased confidence, tended to provide stronger analysis and more in depth evaluation.

There were some strong answers which did analyse and evaluate how economic growth could affect particularly unemployment, inflation and the current account position of the balance of payments. There were some perceptive comments about, for example, whether an increase in output will result in lower unemployment will be influenced by what resources are employed to achieve it and why economic growth might be associated with either an increase in a current account deficit or a decrease in a current account deficit.



## F583 Economics of Work and Leisure

### General Comments

This year there were over 3200 candidates taking the paper. The overall standard was, again, very pleasing with candidates finding the paper accessible. Many candidates showed a clear command of analysis and evaluation skills which were applied in an appropriate context. The material in Section A provided a good base for candidates to display their understanding of Theory of the Firm concepts applied to both broadcasting and spectator sports. Related issues such as market failure and wage determination, in the form of economic rent, were also answered well. The numeracy skills required were very basic and the majority gained full marks on a simple calculation.

The Section B questions were evenly spread and allowed candidates to demonstrate good analytical skills on part (a). Once again, some questions did ask for either examples or diagrams and candidates were much better in responding to this request. The part (b) of the Section B questions were generally answered well with two sided analysis which was often supplemented by insightful evaluation.

### Question Comments

1(a) Candidates had very few problems with Q.1 a(i). On the other hand, on Q1a(ii) many candidates were limited to defining ATC and MC. Very few attempted to put these concepts in a more detailed context of broadcasting. Even fewer attempted to explain any differences in the context of broadcasting. Very few picked up on the idea that the marginal cost of broadcasting is virtually zero.

1(b) Candidates found this a straightforward question and were able to identify a barrier, explain how it acted as a barrier and why it prevented entry into the market.

1(c) This proved a demanding question for some candidates. Definitions of economic rent were often confused with transfer earnings. The importance of elasticity of supply was sometimes ignored. Appropriate credit was given to candidates using a diagram as part of their analysis.

1(d) The F583 module is an extension of the microeconomics studied in F581 and candidates were confident in using applying their knowledge of market failure resulting from selling broadcasting rights to Sky and BT. Some candidates ignored the opportunity to comment and, as a result, were limited in their mark.

1(e) The question a very standard type of question, often seen in Section B. The question was, therefore, well answered with candidates making good use of the material provided in answering the question. A significant number ignored the invitation to comment on the broadcasting of 'sport' in the question and focussed solely on 'football'. Those candidates taking a wider view of broadcasting were often able to produce good comment and evaluation.

2(a) This question produced a wide range of answers of varying quality. Those candidates who were confident in their grasp of the marginal concept applied to profit maximisation were able to gain high marks very quickly. Many candidates did not explain why profits are maximised at the level of output where  $MC=MR$  and produced responses full of assertion rather than analysis.

2(b) Candidates were on much more familiar ground here and were able to analyse a wide range of both theoretical and practical alternative objectives to profit maximisation. A more disappointing aspect was a limited attempt to evaluate such alternative objectives. Very few candidates offered a detailed criticism of the assumptions underlying the marginal theory underlying profit maximisation.

3(a) This question was popular and a pleasing number of candidates were able to identify factors affecting wage elasticity of demand and explain the factors using examples. The best candidates had a clear analysis based on reactions to a change in wages. Some candidates confused their answers by focussing on supply factors and others concentrated on why labour with an inelastic wage elasticity of demand could earn high wages.

3(b) Candidates produced good analysis on the impact of a fall in bargaining power using clear economic theory. The question went on to require a broad understanding of recent events in the labour market. Most candidates were able to pick up on the economic recession and the subsequent impact on wages. The best candidates were able to focus on different sections of the labour market comparing unskilled with skilled, private with public sector workers and full time with part time workers. The impact of the growth of zero hour contracts was also discussed.

4(a) This was a popular question but producing some good answers with candidates able to choose types of labour market failure to analyse. Diagrams were used well.

4(b) Candidates had little difficulty in discussing and evaluating the impact of government intervention. The majority were able to identify a wide variety of potential interventions and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such interventions. Again diagrams were used well.

# F584 Transport Economics

## General Comments

There was a wide range in the standard of the examination scripts produced by candidates with many scripts again showing clear understanding of microeconomic concepts applied to transport.

There was clear understanding of the rail industry from the case study. A high proportion of candidates sought both to analyse and to evaluate in Q1. (d) and Q1.(e), the two questions requiring evaluation and judgement. In terms of questions which require judgement, it is important that the comment is linked to analysis. Simply referencing 'size' will not gain higher level marks unless supported by clear and relevant underpinning analysis. Candidates gaining the highest judgement marks were clear on the extent to which an issue depended upon the factors that had been analysed.

The quality of written communication was generally very good although there was often wasted effort with irrelevant material 'setting the scene' in too much depth. This was particularly evident in Q4. (b) where candidates often repeated their answer to Q4. (a) initially before discussing policies to solve the problems of increased road transport. The main reasons for poor performance amongst the weaker scripts were a reliance on description, insufficient focus on the question set (sometimes with good analytical understanding) and a lack of precision particularly on some of the early data response questions.

In Section B Q4 was by far the most popular question, with a variety of different policies discussed with variation in terms of the sophistication of economic analysis used and the quality of diagrams and their incorporation into written answers. This point was also evident in the other options and particularly in Q2. (a) when a diagram was required.

Teachers of this unit are to be congratulated for generating enthusiasm amongst their candidates, resulting in a variety of appropriate approaches which was clearly evident from reading the examination scripts.

## Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) A relatively easy opening question with the majority able to provide a 4 mark explanation of the difference between fixed and variable costs with application to the data.

1(b) This question discriminated well; candidates scoring 4 often simply stated with price elastic demand fare increases would reduce revenue but with price inelastic demand revenue would increase often linking to peak and off-peak respectively. However the link to PED was not always made and therefore candidates were limited to 1/2 marks.

1(c) The link to the reason for improvements in rail network was given in the question paper so each candidate was required to explain why the proposed actions encouraged people to use trains rather than cars. Many candidates simply repeated comments from the question paper rather than using economic concepts in their explanations. Good responses explained how the actions identified could lead to changes in relative prices, increased affordability, changes in opportunity cost, increased convenience, changes in tastes and preferences etc.

1(d) The concept of ‘economic prosperity’ was clearly an issue for some candidates who could not make the link to how the rail network would increase output, growth and/or GDP. However most candidates were able to gain at least one mark for why rail is vital to economic prosperity but then fell down on the reasons why it is not vital to economic prosperity, therefore no marks could be given for a judgement. Good responses for counter analysis cited lack of flexibility of rail, often with explicit comparison to other modes and then made a judgement on the need for greater integration.

1(e) There were many good answers explaining the benefits of monopolies in terms of the natural monopoly argument, economies of scale and use of abnormal profits to fund research and development. Better responses then discussed possible problems mainly linked to lack of competition. Many candidates lost marks because they did not apply their answer specifically to “rail infrastructure”. Simple links to tracks, Network Rail, stations etc. would have been sufficient to gain these extra marks on both sides of the argument. However many candidates gained maximum marks with good judgements generally in terms of the need to prevent duplication of resource use and the need for regulation.

2(a) Most understood that when marginal cost is equal to marginal revenue profits are maximised and were able to provide diagrams which varied in accuracy between candidates. However very few were able to provide written analysis in explanation. Many examples described different levels of profit rather than comparing additions to revenue with additions to cost from producing one more unit of output in order to analyse the impact on profit.

2(b) This was generally well answered with candidates showing an excellent understanding of economic inefficiency and economic efficiency and an ability to use diagrams to aid the analysis of different types of efficiency. Most therefore were able to access Level 4. Differentiation between candidates was on the use of economic concepts to base their argument and whether they had used examples of transport infrastructure in their answer as the question requested. Many used rail infrastructure as the basis of their answer but the best answers also used examples from road construction, airports, air traffic control, ports etc. This allowed an informed judgement to be made to access the higher marks.

3(a) Candidates indicated good understanding of both monopolistic competition and oligopoly market structures with only the occasional confusion between the former and monopoly. The best answers made clear comparisons between the market structures, for e.g. by analysing how the different levels of barriers to entry resulted in different levels of profit in the long run or, analysing how with fewer firms in oligopoly, interdependence resulted in price rigidity which was not the case in monopolistic competition.

3(b) Candidates provided some good answers applying the concepts of negative/ positive externalities to air transport. The main reason for poor performance was a one-sided argument based on the unsustainability of air transport. Better responses rectified this by using policies such as regulation and taxation to analyse how sustainability was improving. The best answers displayed excellent understanding of sustainability by reference to future resource allocation and were therefore able to achieve the higher mark bands.

4(a) This was by far the most popular choice but mainly for part (b). However there were some thorough answers to this question with some excellent understanding of the impact of increased road transport on the environment. Most candidates were able then to analyse the economic impact of this in terms of market failure / overconsumption / allocative inefficiency. The best answers also specified how third parties were affected by external costs.

4(b) This question had been thoroughly prepared for and most candidates produced good answers indicating good understanding of how various policies could be used to alleviate the problems caused by increased road transport. Many took far too long explaining the problems which was often repetition of part (a). However there was some excellent analysis of the effectiveness of chosen policies (the lack of effectiveness often analysed better). Differentiation between candidates was largely on analysis of how policies such as road pricing, indirect taxation and regulation worked with the best answers incorporating diagrams effectively in their analysis. There were many developed judgements relating to the need for an integrated policy.

## F585 The Global Economy

### General Comments:

Performance in the last full sitting of The Global Economy was characterised in the main by good subject knowledge and a thorough reading of the pre-issued stimulus material. Candidates were less secure in their knowledge of the theory of comparative advantage and the terms of trade than in the use of AD-AS analysis. There was some evidence that candidates had made use of rote learnt material, which was not always well-adapted to the specific questions on the paper. This was most apparent in answers to Questions 1 (c) and 3. Nevertheless the standard of responses was high, reflected in the increase in the mean mark for the paper as a whole.

### Comments on Individual Questions:

1(a) Candidates responded confidently to this question on the factors promoting globalisation and scored highly. A wide range of factors other than the reduction in trade barriers were credited in the mark scheme, with the reduction in the real cost of transport and advancements in communications technology being the most frequently cited.

1(b) This question was not well answered by the majority of candidates. Very few were able to go beyond a definition of comparative advantage to analyse the benefits of trade which the theory predicts. Most candidates used other theories to explain the advantages of trade and therefore did not engage with the question. It was rare to see use of Production Possibility Frontiers or matrices to establish differences in relative opportunity costs and, where they were used, there was often confusion between comparative advantage and reciprocal absolute advantage. Common misconceptions included the idea that the theory of comparative advantage predicted an increase in productive efficiency from specialisation and an increase in the production possibilities of individual economies. Those candidates who had a good understanding of the theory were able to illustrate how specialisation enabled consumption possibilities to be expanded at mutually beneficial terms of trade thereby increasing economic welfare.

1(c) Candidates were able to show good analysis of how the depreciation of the US dollar over the time period specified could account for the reduction in the US current account deficit. Those who did not access Level 3 of the mark scheme invariably asserted that a reduction in export prices and increase in import prices would reduce the current account deficit without explaining the impact on either the demand for or value of exports or imports. There were three main evaluative comments offered by candidates: the Marshall-Lerner condition; the J curve effect; and the impact of the global recession. Marks in Level 4 of the mark scheme were determined by the ability of candidates to link these ideas to specific time periods in the data. Generic comments which were not rooted in the data were awarded a mark at the bottom of Level 4. Some responses did not focus on the “overall trend”, as specified by the question, and instead chose to explain how the US was able to maintain a current account deficit by inflows on the financial and capital account or focused exclusively on individual time periods. These responses could still gain credit in Level 2 and occasionally Level 3 of the mark scheme but were unable to access all marks because of a poor focus on the question.

2(a) For many this question posed few problems. Candidates in the main showed a good awareness of the measurement of the Human Development Index and were able to use the data in Fig. 3.1 to explain how Zambia’s HDI value had increased between 2007 and 2013. It was surprising how some candidates used the wrong data to support the idea that the HDI had improved, comparing indicators over the period 2000 to 2013 instead.

2(b) The mark scheme accommodates a number of different approaches adopted by candidates to analyse the significance for Zambia of the fall in its terms of trade between 2007 and 2009. Most candidates were able to correctly identify the cause of Zambia's falling terms of trade but few recognised that importance of the price elasticity of demand for Zambia's main export, copper. Nevertheless, the mark scheme allowed candidates to achieve full marks without this recognition. The mark scheme identified four main approaches: the impact of falling copper prices on export revenue; the impact on the economy of the ability to buy fewer imports; the impact of a shortage of foreign currency reserves; and the consequences of a decline in tax revenue for the Zambian government. Most candidates did not follow a single line of analysis to its logical conclusion, but were able to gain marks by a 'pick and mix' from the four approaches. Weaker candidates did not understand the meaning of the terms of trade and some had a weak grasp of the difference between value and price in defining the terms of trade. Given the context provided by the pre-issued stimulus material of falling commodity (copper) prices, responses which explained the impact of higher import prices struggled to pick up application and analysis marks.

2(c) This question elicited a high level of analysis and evaluation of the role of remittances in promoting development. The best answers made a very clear link between remittances and the meaning and nature of development, with the very best analysing how remittances would improve aspects of the HDI. Level 3 marks could still be earned where the link was less explicit, with credit given to responses which explained the impact on AD and / or access to life sustaining goods and services. There were some excellent comments on the impact of outward migration on labour supply, the difficulties of channelling remittances into improvements in infrastructure and in some cases the impact of these increased financial flows on the exchange rate. Where these comments were developed, for example through the effect of outward migration on long run aggregate supply, candidates were able to access the higher marks in Level 4 of the mark scheme.

3 Candidates had a good grasp of how a range of supply-side policies might help to promote economic growth, and this was usually well-supported by AD-AS analysis allowing candidates to access Level 3 of the mark scheme. Candidates used Extract 5 of the stimulus material to good effect to identify a number of supply-side constraints on economic growth in Zambia. It was not necessary to cover all of these constraints, indeed candidates did so tended to produce repetitive analysis of the impact of an increase in Zambia's LRAS. There were some responses which tended to focus too much on the pros and cons of Foreign Direct Investment, such that the broader issues surrounding the effectiveness of supply-side policies were secondary to the answer provided. Differentiation was in the main in the marks achieved in Level 4 of the mark scheme basic discussion of the effectiveness of supply-side policies focused on general points about time lags, the requirement for higher government expenditure, poor governance and corruption and the need for policies to stimulate AD. Such responses were awarded marks in Level 4, Band 1. To progress beyond this, candidates needed to show more developed discussion in terms of the use of the economist's toolkit of theories and concepts and provide context for the discussion relevant to Zambia and / or developing countries more broadly. For example, where the need for demand-side policies was linked to Zambia's declining terms of trade and the Prebisch-Singer hypothesis Level 4 Band 2 could be awarded with confidence. The highest marks were reserved for candidates who were able to provide a judgement on the issues which was consistent with such developed discussion. This took a number of different forms: some candidates picked out the need for reform of the tax system whilst others prioritised supply-side policies in terms of their ability to change the structure of the economy and the nature or composition of AD in developing economies such as Zambia.

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