

Applied Business (Double Award)

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J213 J226**

Report on the Units

June 2010

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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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Chief Examiner's Report

This was the second examination series for this qualification and candidate entries were relatively low for units A241 and A242. The entries were very low for A243 and there were no entries for A244. This was to be expected, as this is the first year of the qualification and units A243 and A244 are the units undertaken for J226 GCSE (Double Award) in Applied Business.

INSET courses were available during the spring, summer and autumn terms of 2009 in preparation for first teaching in September 2009. They provided the opportunity to discuss the structure of the qualification, controlled assessment, planning, delivery and assessment of units, together with networking and sharing ideas for best practice. Further INSET courses are being offered during autumn 2010.

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 in which 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 that 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 the candidate to improve assessment outcomes. Whilst the candidate 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).

A241 and A243

The candidates had been taught the content of the unit(s) but needed to develop their examination technique and apply their answers to the case study in unit A243 or, in the case of A241, to a business which they had studied. For unit A241, when questions ask candidates to respond using a business which they have studied, candidates must apply their answers to the selected business. It is not sufficient merely to name the business and provide a theoretical response. Within the 10 mark questions, a maximum of two marks could be awarded for a theoretical answer. Therefore, some candidates scored low marks on the 10 mark questions. The Principal Examiner report for A243 that follows reflects the low entry at this series.

A242

When using the OCR Repository, it would be best practise to save all of the key evidence in one document. It would be helpful if the additional support material, ie research. is saved in a separate folder.

Tasks 1, 3, 4 and 5 must be carried out under controlled conditions using the research findings from Task 2. If Task 2 is weak, it is difficult for candidates to score high marks for the tasks carried out under controlled conditions.

At this series, there were some lenient assessment decisions, particularly at the higher levels. Some candidates who had been awarded Level 3 marks had not met the Level 3 requirements of the assessment objective; particularly in relation to AO3.

A241 Business in action

This was the second examination for unit A241 and an increased number of centres entered candidates this series with a good range of marks being awarded. It was clear that centres had prepared candidates with the theoretical knowledge required to do well in this unit. Visits to businesses and the use of case study material were also evident.

Questions for this unit will either be purely theoretical, applied to the business given in the texts in the examination itself, applied to a business such as or applied to a business which the candidate has studied. The introductory texts need to be read carefully by the candidates and used as appropriate when answering the questions. The texts put the business, in this case C & D Bank plc, in context and help candidates to apply their answers. Questions which use the phrase 'a business such as C & D Bank plc' allow candidates to use their own business research. In this examination 'a business such as' could have included any type of service sector outlet, a business linked to finance or a public limited company.

When a question asks the candidate about a business 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 then write a general, possibly theoretical, answer. Candidates score very low marks for doing this. ON the 10 mark questions there is a maximum of two marks for a theoretical answer. Including the name of the business in the answer a couple of times is not applying it and an answer of this type will also score a low mark.

Questions asking candidates to explain a way or reason are generally marked on a one mark 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 required in the question). A number of candidates stated two or three different reasons rather than developing one of them. This means that candidates often limited themselves to a maximum of half marks on these questions by not developing their reasons.

Within the specification there are easily identifiable areas where evaluation questions could be asked. Some of these areas include reference to a business 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 area of the specification where 'a business candidates have studied' has been mentioned.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) – This part of the question was answered well by most candidates.

1(b) - A number of different answers was acceptable for this part of the question but some candidates did not even attempt it.

1(c) and **Q1(d)** These two questions asked about tasks which would be carried out by the marketing department, part (c), and the human resources department, part (d), and not for a description of the role of which functional area in the business. Candidates need to develop each task mentioned to gain the two marks available.

1(e) (i) and **(ii)** - Operating in an enterprising way is clearly on the specification. A number of candidates wrote about things which someone should already be doing in their job for part (i), rather than thinking of how they could act in an enterprising way. For example; turn up to work, be polite to customers. The stem for part (ii), stated 'other than through marketing' but

unfortunately a lot of good answers involved methods which were clearly marketing and so gained no credit.

2(a)(i) and (ii) – Some candidates gave a general answer to part (i) without offering a SMART objective. This was needed to gain the marks. Part (ii) was answered well by most candidates.

2(b) A very good definition of sustainability was provided by a number of candidates. The use of an example helped weaker candidates to gain a mark.

2(c) - Candidates offered many very good ideas for how the bank could be environmentally friendly.

2(d) - There will be a number of evaluation questions of this type in future sittings of this unit. Some will ask the candidate to write about a business they have studied and some will use the business in the texts on the question paper itself. In both cases candidates need to ensure that they are genuinely applying their answer to the business, not merely putting in the name and writing a general answer. Some knowledgeable candidates were limiting themselves to Level 1 marks because they were not applying their answer.

This part of the question was an 'evaluation' question and was aimed at the middle and lower ability ranges. The use of a bullet pointed list of prompts allowed candidates of all levels to access this question.

Candidates had clearly studied businesses which act in an ethical manner. Answers which were applied scored high marks. In order to score seven or more marks, candidates needed to evaluate their answer and state which was the most important factor. Some candidates wrote at length about all of the factors but limited themselves to six marks as they did not 'evaluate'. Fewer candidates than expected took the final prompt and wrote about which factor was the most important. This style of evaluation question will feature again.

3(a) - This part of the question was answered well by most candidates.

3(b) – The same comments as for Question 2(d) apply here. The answer has to be applied to a business the candidate has studied but in this case the context was 'upgrading its current ICT equipment'. A number of candidates wrote a theoretical answer about ICT provision and this scored low marks.

3(c) – This part of the question was generally well answered. The correct name of the act was needed to score the first mark.

4(a) - This part of the question was answered well by most candidates and a range of stakeholder groups were included.

4(b) - The same comments as for Question 2(d) again apply here. The answer has to be applied to a business the candidate has studied but in this case the context was that of the business 'not listening to stakeholder groups'. Some candidates wrote in general about the impact of stakeholder groups on the business.

4(c)(i) and (ii) - It was clear where candidates had been taught the theory of interest rates and exchange rates. There were full mark answers from candidates of all abilities. Some candidates did not read part (i) correctly and wrote about exchange rates rather than interest rates.

A242 Making Your Mark in Business

A small number of centres entered candidates for the moderation of unit A242 in May 2010. Fifteen centres made entries, four withdrew, leaving 11 centres to moderate. The comments in this report are, therefore, based on the experiences of moderating a small number of centres.

The controlled assessment materials for this unit are available via OCR Interchange. Candidates must use one of the five scenarios provided by OCR. From the work moderated at this series, different approaches were evident. The majority of centres had selected one scenario for use by the whole cohort. However, in a small number of centres, a range of scenarios had been used. Work was moderated using scenarios 1, 2, 3 and 5; 5 being the most popular at this series.

Task 1 (AO2). Candidates must produce their action plans, addressing each of the bullet points within the task (two hours allocated). Following Task 1, candidates 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.

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.

Task 3 (AO1). Candidates are required to clearly identify and describe how the chosen business is currently meeting the needs of the target market. 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 candidates to describe **two** ideas of 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 (AO2). Candidates must present their research findings in appropriate formats in relation to both customers and competitors. 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, eg charts, graphs, tables, location maps. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Task 4 (AO1). This task was generally well evidenced. At Level 2, descriptions are enhanced by the use of a range of examples (AO2). For Level 3, the item of promotional material should be clearly applied to the business, the target market and based on research (AO3). At Level 3, the 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. 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, together with contributions of other group members, with links to the action plan. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

A244 Business and You

There were no entries for this unit.

A243 Working in Business

This is the second session in which this unit has been assessed. There was a small entry, therefore, the observations have some grounding and can be supported from evidence but these will be more accurate as the entry increases.

The content of this unit is amazing in its depth and breadth, therefore, it is important that candidates are particularly well prepared for this examination. Revision guides and practice of 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 roughly take up one quarter of the marks allocated on each paper.

The use of a calculator is allowed and centres are recommended to urge 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 are asked to consider the success or not of a promotional campaign designed by the marketing and sales functional area.

Centres will note that specific ICT applications such as spreadsheets and databases will be tested within this paper. Evidence of this can be seen by centres on Question 4 of this paper.

Centres still need to prepare candidates to effectively answer the longer questions which are assessed using level of response criteria and also that of quality of written communication. There is evidence that where centres have done this, the structure and style of candidate responses allowed them 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 aiding candidates to tackle questions requiring them to demonstrate the higher level skills of analysis, evaluation and supported judgement. Centres should be aware that questions have been designed so that all candidates get an opportunity to demonstrate the Level 3 skills of analysis and evaluation.

Question 1

1(a)(i) This part of the question was well answered by all candidates.

1(a)(ii) Many candidates did not succeed in answering this correctly even if they had answered part (ai) correctly. Credit was given should the candidates have answered 1 (ai) incorrectly.
1 (a)iii) Similar observations to 1 (aii).

1(b) This part of the question was well answered by most candidates.

1(c)(i) This part of the question was well answered by most candidates.

1(c)(ii) Most candidates were able to attempt this part of the question and gain some credit. The structure of the response seemed to enable candidates to access it more easily. There were some candidates who were unable to give any ways in which the Administration and ICT functional area could improve communication. Credit was given to candidates who gave the wrong answer to part (ci).

1(d) Most candidates were able to identify at least two services offered by the customer services functional area; however, there were very few who were able to identify four. There were a number of repeats as candidates were unable to think of four such services.

1(e) This was a difficult question which candidates at the lower end found difficult to answer. The concept of functional areas working together seemed to be alien to candidates which is a mystery as it forms not only a part of this unit but also A241. Most candidates gained two out of the four marks available for this part of the question.

Question 2

2(a)(i) This part of the question was well answered by the majority of candidates.

2(a)(ii) It was very pleasing to see that the majority of candidates were able to distinguish between open and closed questions and were able to identify the reasons why closed questions were the best option for this situation. Most candidates were able to gain credit with most gaining two or more marks.

2(b) All the candidates were able to construct an appropriate closed question.

Question 3

3(a) Most candidates were able to gain one mark but most did not fully explain the role of the ASA to gain full credit.

3(b)(i) Most candidates were able to pick out that 'guaranteed to get rid of 100% of all dust' contravened ASA guidelines and many were able to explain the problem.

3(b)(ii) All candidates were able to write a more appropriate slogan, some of which were very creative.

3(c) This part of the question was aimed at advertising so candidates who focussed on sales promotion gained no credit. Most candidates were capable of stating the advantages and disadvantages of types of advertising including that of a local newspaper which was required at Level 2. At Level 3 analysis of the chosen methods and a judgement as to the most suitable were required. This level was not well addressed by candidates. This question tests the Quality of Written Communication and candidates can only gain full marks if they satisfy these requirements.

Question 4

4(a) Most candidates were able to complete the pay slip correctly.

4(b) Most candidates were able to ascertain the problems for Nelson du Toit and TJ Cleaning Services of the incorrect paying of employees. However, only a small majority were able to extend their response to gain full credit.

4(c) Most candidates were able to plot the correct lines on the break even chart, however, they found it more difficult to label the axis correctly. The y-axis should be labelled costs and revenues.

4(d) Most candidates were able to gain one mark when describing a break even point but did not gain full credit because their response needed expansion.

4(e)(i) Most candidates were able to describe a strategy for lowering the break even point (eg lower either fixed/variable costs) and pleasingly added a linked explanation.

4(e)(ii) Candidates who were aware of spreadsheets were able to gain credit on this part of the question; however, those who did not were often vague and gained no marks.

Question 5

5(a) Most candidates were able to fill in the details at the top of the e-mail and some were able to gain some credit for the correct content in the body of the message.

5(b) Candidates who were able to consider the advantages and disadvantages of email and other suitable methods of communication and then provide a supported judgement were able to gain marks on this part of the question. Pleasingly, some candidates were able to gain full credit.

5(c) The bullet points within this part of the question were included to support the candidates' responses and this appears to have been a success as they were able to use these as a writing framework. However, most candidates were only able to gain Level 2 marks for identifying the consequences to both parties of complaints being dealt with unsatisfactorily and only a small minority started to analyse and evaluate the potential problems or possible actions.

Questions 3(c), 5(b) and 5(c) all allowed candidates to produce extended writing and centres must be aware that to gain top marks the QWC must be suitably appropriate.

The 'in-tray' exercises stated in the specification, some of which were tested in this question paper, will continue to be an important part of this unit.

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