

Applied Business

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J213**

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

OCR Report to Centres

June 2013

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

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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

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) the candidates should only have access to the 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 a final version of the tasks. During the write-up phase the 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 and within the specification itself. 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 the keeping of 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 full range of resources available. Many candidates were able to write their responses in context and, hence, access the higher marks. The candidates had been well prepared with theoretical knowledge of the units. However, some needed to develop their examination technique and to apply their answers to the scenario and also, in the case of unit A241, to a business which they had studied. On unit A241, when the questions ask the candidates to respond using a business which they have studied, the candidates must apply their answers to the selected business. It is not sufficient merely to name the business and to provide a theoretical response.

Centres are reminded that calculators are allowed for both unit 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 of their 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 examination series candidates have been 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 on 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 Nantwold Hall Ltd, in context and give the candidates invaluable information which allowed them to apply their answers and enabled them to access the 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. Candidates were asked to state the activity of the business, this was to help them focus on what their chosen 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.

For the 10 mark questions, 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 Nantwold Hall Ltd, Lucy's ice cream parlour or their chosen business (depending on the question).

Questions asking the 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 required in 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. 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 elements where evaluation questions can be asked. Some of these aspects 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 element of the specification where 'a business candidates have studied' is mentioned.

Answers presented for the longer written questions seem to indicate that candidates had been prepared well. 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 be applied. 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 the higher ability candidates the opportunity to fully demonstrate understanding using application of knowledge and context. Candidates of all ability ranges are able to write at length for the 10 mark questions. The scenario which was set enabled the candidates to apply their subject knowledge in an applied and realistic manner.

Comments on Individual Questions

The amount of detail contained within the texts has increased over recent examination series. This is to provide the candidates with more background information and, hopefully, assisting them to put their answers in context. The majority of the responses showed a good understanding of the work of Nantwold Hall and the candidates were generally able to use the information supplied to gain context marks as appropriate.

Question 1

- (a) This was a standard type of question on this paper but a significant number of responses answered 'private limited company'.
- (b) A number of the responses to this part of the question indicated incorrectly that private limited companies had partners.
- (c) Business environment is a section on the specification and in the examination the same terminology is used as in the specification. This part of the question was well answered by those candidates who understood what was meant by the 'business environment'. Those candidates who did not tended to write a general answer about uncertainty in business.
- (d) Responses to this part of the question covered a range of ways of operating in an ethical manner but many candidates did not achieve the full four marks because they did not give an explanation. Many responses gained no credit because they went down the sustainable route. As with part (c), ethical and sustainable are two different elements of the specification.
- (e) The supporting information within this part of the question encouraged responses to be written at length but many candidates missed the 'not' in the actual question and received no marks. Some analytical responses could not access the higher Level 3 marks because there was no evidence of an analysis of all of the consequences and no judgement was supported.

Question 2

- (a)(i) Many responses to this part of the question contained aims rather than objectives and so no marks could be awarded.
- (a)(ii) Responses to this part of the question demonstrated a general understanding of the importance of setting targets and, therefore, achieved some marks.
- (b) Testing knowledge of the Equality Act was notified to centres, see link below.
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/75839-notice-to-centres-equality-act.pdf>
Many responses did not, unfortunately, gain the marks which would have been expected.
- (c) There were some good responses to this part of the question, which were obviously written in the context of the actual business named. A lack of analysis meant many answers stayed in Level 2 – a maximum of six marks.

Question 3

- (a) This part of the question was well answered.
- (b) A significant number of responses to this part of the question were theoretical answers about the advantages and disadvantages of being a sole trader and franchisee. Not writing in context meant that neither higher Level 2 marks nor Level 3 marks could be awarded.
- (c) This part of the question was generally well answered but a significant proportion of the candidates did not extend their response to access the development marks, so could only achieve a maximum of three marks.
- (d) Responses to this part of the question showed a good understanding in context of the conflict which might occur.

Question 4

- (a)(i) A number of responses to this part of the question failed to answer the question and explained **why** the ICT had been updated, rather than describing **how**.
- (a)(ii) and (a)(iii) Even if the answer to part (a)(i) was incorrect, candidates were still able to access marks on these two parts of the question. Some responses related incorrectly to customers rather than to the business itself.
- (b) Many responses to this part of the question did not grasp the link between interest rates and the loan which Lucy had to take out.
- (c) This part of the question was generally better answered than part (b) because the responses could focus on a rise in prices from suppliers.
- (d)(i) and (d)(ii) These parts of the question were well answered providing that the candidates had read both of the questions and realised to whom the benefit related.

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. It is not acceptable for centres to create their own scenario. Candidates should use the actual names of their selected business and competitors within their work, rather than using the names within the scenarios. Candidates must ensure 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 (two hours allocated). Candidates would benefit from using a tabular format to design the action plan, clearly showing how each task will be approached. They may find it helpful to include actual and target dates for completion. 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, focus group or acting as a mystery shopper. Primary and secondary research should focus on the marketing mix. It is not necessary for candidates to include all their research findings from Task 2, although the inclusion of a copy of the questionnaire is useful. Any appendices should be clearly labelled and cross-referenced to the relevant section of the work.

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 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. The two ideas must be based on findings from their primary and secondary 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. Candidates find it helpful to research the marketing mix of the business and its competitors. It would be helpful if candidates included a copy of the questionnaire and a tally chart. When analysing questionnaire data, candidates should be encouraged to use percentages. The use of tables to compare products/services and prices of the business and its competitors 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 different 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. Such an approach is helpful to the moderator when confirming the standard of the candidate's work. Annotations could also show the reasons for the choices made, eg font size, colours, images.

Task 4 (AO3). Candidates must address each of the three sections within bullet point three. A frequent omission was section one – why your chosen item of promotional material is more appropriate than any other. Candidates may wish to consider a range of promotional media eg leaflet, poster, billboard, newspaper/ magazine advertisement, radio, television. 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, an evaluation of costs may consider different ways of producing and distributing promotional material. Candidates may wish to include a comparison of costs with other promotional media.

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. The candidates also need to reflect on the changes which they made to the action plan and why they feel those changes were necessary. They may consider whether or not the changes were avoidable had the candidate 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

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 itself, not all aspects will necessarily be tested in each examination series. The only constant will be the finance functional area which will take up about one quarter of the marks allocated on each paper.

The use of a calculator is allowed and this will assist the candidates in the accuracy of their calculations. Such calculations will almost inevitably take place in the finance element of the paper on documents such as a cash flow forecast, but could also take place in relation to other elements; for example, when analysing promotional data.

Centres should not ignore the ‘In-Tray Exercises’ which are stipulated in the specification as aspects of these are tested on each paper. The finance element is usually well attempted but the production of office documents is not an aspect in which the candidates seem to demonstrate much confidence. The candidates are expected to understand the format and layout of documents such as an email message, telephone message, press release and, on this paper, a formal letter. Centres should note the comments in relation to Question 5(c) in this report.

Centres still need to prepare their candidates to effectively answer the longer questions which are assessed using level of response criteria and which also assess the candidates’ quality of written communication. There is evidence that where centres have done this, the structure and style of the candidates’ 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 helping the candidates to attempt those questions which require 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 have an opportunity to demonstrate the Level 3 skills of analysis and evaluation. In every examination series the longer response questions will have an eight mark tariff.

Most candidates made an attempt to answer all of 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 **calculators**. Calculators are identified as required additional materials on the examination paper. Centres need to ensure that all candidates are suitably equipped to enable them to reach their highest potential. Some candidates’ writing is difficult to read and being a Business examination, presentation and accuracy are important.

Comments on individual questions.

Question 1

- (a) This part of the question was well answered by all candidates.
- (b) Part (i) of this part of the question was often answered poorly as many candidates selected the geographical option rather than the correct answer of flat. This then limited their opportunity to gain credit in parts (ii) and (iii) because, even though this section was assessed as though part (b)(i) was correct, many such responses did not identify the advantages and disadvantages

of a geographical organisational structure. Those candidates who realised this requirement generally provided the correct answer as flat were then able to answer parts (ii) and (iii).

(c) This part of the question asked for a task which a Chief Executive (CE) may carry out and this was poorly answered with many candidates generally being unaware of the CE's executive role. Some were aware of the role but did not identify tasks, such as appraising the directors, in their responses.

Part (d) was well answered by most candidates with many able to identify the task, such as receiving visitors, and then they were able to describe how administration fulfilled this role. Centres should be aware that those responses which identified IT related roles were given credit as this function is linked with Administration in the specification.

(e) Candidates who performed well on this part of the question were those who realised that they must explain the way in which the Marketing and Sales functional area supported the work of the Finance and the Production functional areas. Many candidates struggled with the link to Production where most could not link, for example, marketing and sales research to the projection of sales figures, with Production then producing that number of newspapers, which would inevitably prove to be more cost effective to the business when considering the purchase of raw materials.

Question 2

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

(b) This part of the question was also well answered by all of the candidates.

(c)(i) In this part of the question the emphasis was on the advantage to the directors of Billy Bounce sending them an email. The most common answer referred to the speed compared to a meeting and that the directors would not then be distracted from their tasks in their own functional area. Some candidates responded in a general manner or explained an advantage to Billy Bounce, the Chief Executive Officer, which was not the question.

(c)(ii) This part of the question was answered better than the previous part of the question, although some candidates still responded in a general manner or explained an advantage to Billy Bounce. The most common responses focused on the lack of personal interaction and the subsequent inability to understand the true emotions of the email sender, and also the difficulties which may occur if the hardware or software malfunctions.

Question 3

(a) This part of the question was generally answered well by the candidates. There were a significant number who confused the Remittance Advice Note with a Goods Received Note when considering the document which is sent to the supplier 'with the payment'.

(b) If candidates were able to distinguish between revenue and expenses identified in the stem to this part of the question then they were able to respond accurately. Even with the incorrect figures entered, most candidates were able to calculate gross and net profit.

(c) The balance sheet in this part of the question was poorly answered by a significant proportion of the candidates. Many had no comprehension that total net assets should match the sum by which the business is financed. Therefore, some candidates calculated the assets and liabilities section and then either added or subtracted the financed amounts. Most candidates were able to recognise that liabilities needed to be subtracted from the total current assets, and those candidates generally realised that fixed and current assets were added to get the total net assets. Most candidates picked up that the figure they need for net profit/loss was that which

was calculated in part (b), and entered this correctly. Even though the dates on the profit and loss statement and the balance sheet on the question paper were different, this did not confuse the candidates. It was, however, taken into account when the mark scheme was finalised.

(d) Those candidates who understood the role of a balance sheet in the financial life of a business were able to answer this part of the question with a certain level of understanding, coupled with varying degrees of analysis and evaluation. Some candidates were able to identify items from the balance sheet, for which they were given credit. The crucial part was that the loan is for £250000, and extracting evidence from the balance sheet which would persuade the bank to lend the money required for the new printing presses. Therefore, if the calculations were correct, the total net assets exceeded that amount. Candidates were required to make a decision supported by correct analysis and evaluation in order to access the top marks in this part of the question. One additional analytical and evaluative element which was added to the mark scheme at the time of the standardisation meeting was the fact that the dates on the profit and loss statement and the balance sheet differed.

Question 4

(a) The crucial aspect of this part of the question was that the candidates needed to identify and describe methods of sales promotion which would be appropriate for a newspaper. Therefore, some methods of advertising gained no credit and ‘BOGOF’ was only allowed if it was in an appropriate context.

(b) Candidates answered this part of the question reasonably well, especially if their response focused on the three given methods and in the context of a local newspaper. Therefore, candidates who chose local radio, and to an extent the website, were able to write in an extended manner in the context of the question. Most candidates realised that television would be inappropriate due to the expense and the target market.

(c) Pleasingly most candidates were able to give a guideline of the ASA; however, many were not able to explain this in the context of advertisements in the *Daily Bugle*.

Question 5

(a) This part of the question required for three methods of customer support to be identified rather than a general question about the role of the Customer Service functional area. Candidates who realised this were able to answer correctly.

(b) The candidates generally answered this part of the question well. They were able to identify consequences and then explain them. The most common responses revolved around poor reputation and a loss of sales.

(c) In this part of the question the candidates were asked to create a formal letter from given information. Most candidates were able to document the required content of the letter, but many were unable to construct the outline of a formal letter correctly and, because of this, very few responses could access Level 3 marks. Candidates should be taught to construct a fully-blocked business letter. Common faults included the inappropriate use of the name in the address; an incorrect salutation; an incorrect complimentary close (which should have been ‘Yours sincerely’); and a lack of space between this and Bertie Lodge’s name.

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. It is not acceptable for centres to create their own scenario.

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 have been 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 20 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. The 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. A justification is required of why the application pack will be successful (or unsuccessful). There should 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 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 need to evaluate how the three laws outlined on page 21 of the unit specification impact on the recruitment and selection process for their selected job role. The legislation includes the Employment Rights Act, the Equality Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act. Candidates need to avoid generic explanations of how legislation impacts on the recruitment and selection process. They must link their evaluation to their chosen job role.

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, skills required for the role, duration of training, venue and costs involved. Candidates should consider both on-the-job and off-the-job training.

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

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998
Facsimile: 01223 552627
Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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Head office
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Facsimile: 01223 552553

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