

## CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)

*Examiners' report*

# BUSINESS

05834–05837, 05878



## Unit 1 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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## Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

## Paper Unit 1 series overview

This series has seen a marked improvement in the ability of candidates to understand and interpret numerical data. The best scripts coupled these skills with an ability to analyse situations from a business's perspective and make practical recommendations.

Responses received for the three high tariff questions in Section C show that the scenario, based on a public library, was extremely accessible to candidates. Despite being a public sector organisation, the vast majority of candidates were able to give contextually accurate and comprehensive answers to the questions in Section C.

Weaker scripts continue to show inadequate preparation by candidates. In particular these scripts showed limited evidence of preparation for Section B, the one area of the paper where candidates can prepare in advance. Some candidates either did not demonstrate that they had done any research into specific businesses or overlooked the guidance given in this series' pre-issued research brief on what issues to focus on. Centres are advised to devote adequate time to the preparation of candidates for Section B of this paper.

### **Candidates who did well demonstrated four particular strengths**

- good numerical skills, both of calculation and interpretation
- a wide variety of research of businesses, targeted to the research brief
- the ability to apply understanding to the unseen scenario in Section C
- the ability to analyse and evaluate.

Section A was generally well answered by most candidates. Some candidates lost marks by leaving a multiple choice question blank. Candidates should be encouraged to indicate a response to all 20 questions. A minority of candidates also lost marks because they ticked two responses, say B and D, such hedging cannot be given. Candidates should be instructed not to take this approach. Where a candidate indicates an answer and subsequently changes their mind, they should clearly cross out their original tick.

Section B was not as well answered as might be expected, given the clear guidance given in this series' pre-issued research brief on areas to focus on.

### **The research brief linked to the questions in Section B as follows**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How businesses can use technology to their advantage.</li><li>• The role of conflict management in business.</li><li>• Raising finance through crowd-funding.</li><li>• Compliance with the Data Protection Act.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Q22 Explain two ways a business that you have researched uses mobile technology.</li><li>• Q25 Explain how a business that you have researched resolved a conflict with an external stakeholder group.</li><li>• Q24 Analyse one advantage and one disadvantage to a business that you have researched of raising finance through crowd-funding.</li><li>• Q23 Identify four ways a business that you have researched complies with the Data Protection Act.</li></ul> |
|--|--|

***The research brief linked to the questions in Section B as follows***

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the functional areas of a business contribute to its success.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q21 Describe one way a business that you have researched sells its products.</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

The wording of Questions 23-25 linked extremely closely with the wording of the pre-issued research brief but some candidates still showed very limited knowledge or understanding. In some cases this appeared to be a centre-wide problem (especially on Q24 on crowd-funding); such centres may be advised to emphasise to candidates the importance of focussing their business research on the topics indicated in the corresponding series' research brief.

Evidence suggests that those candidates who chose to answer all five questions in Section B on the same business appeared to do less well than those who selected the business they used to suit the question. Candidates should be encouraged to vary the business they use depending on the question i.e. to choose a specific business for which their understanding is suitable for answering the question. This was especially important for Question 22, where the business chosen needed to be a user of mobile technology.

Section C contained three high tariff extended response questions. These questions were level of response marked. Candidates needed to demonstrate the skills of analysis (Level 3) and evaluation (Level 4) to gain the highest marks.

***An analytical response must contain implications to the business***

Analysis requires candidates to develop their answers to include impacts on the business as an organisation.

Examples could include impacts on costs, cash flow, improved decision-making, customer loyalty, quality, reputation, labour turnover, absenteeism, service provision or usage rates.

Please note that for a public sector organisation references to profit were not awardable.

***An evaluative response must contain a justified judgement***

Evaluation requires a reasoned decision that answers the question. E.g. an assessment of the library's non-financial performance (Q28), why certain changes to the library's service provision are better than others (Q30), and whether being a government-owned organisation is a benefit or drawback to the library (Q31).

Candidates should be encouraged to reach decisions and give detailed justification to support their argument using contextual information. While an accurate judgement that applies to most businesses would achieve a low Level 4 mark, an answer which argues using the particular circumstances of the business scenario will be more highly rewarded.

Areas which caused most problems on this paper were confusion over ethics and legality (Question 1), economic factors (Question 9); the calculation of breakeven (Question 10); the interpretation of a cashflow forecast (Question 15); the meaning of the term 'remuneration' (Question 20); crowd-funding as a source of finance (Question 24), an accurate understanding of fixed and variable costs (Question 27a) and the concept of centralisation (Question 29a). On the other hand, Question 23 on data protection, Question 25 on conflict resolution, Questions 27b and c requiring the calculation of fixed and variable costs and Question 30 recommending how to improve the service provision of the library in the light of demographic change, were extremely well answered.

## Question 1

1 Which of the following is a way of improving a firm's ethical profile?

(a) Applying for planning permission

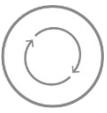
(b) Paying taxation

(c) Sponsoring a cultural event

(d) Using a venture capitalist

[1]

This question was testing understanding of ethical factors as distinct from financial or legal factors. The correct answer being answer (c) sponsoring a cultural event. Very few candidates chose (d) suggesting that there is little confusion between ethical and financial factors. However answers (a) and (b) were quite common, both of these are legal requirements.

	<b>AfL</b>	Centres are advised to give candidates plenty of practice distinguishing between legal and ethical issues. The difference could be reinforced on a regular basis as part of lesson starter or plenary activities. On this specification ethical practices should be taken to mean doing above and beyond what the law requires for the benefit of others. Therefore, while applying for planning permission and paying taxation are legal requirements (given the appropriate circumstances), the sponsoring of a cultural event is going above and beyond what the law requires for the benefit of society
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## Question 9

9 Which one of the following changes in the external environment is **not** an economic factor?

- (a) A fall in the value of the pound
- (b) A reduction in unemployment
- (c) A rise in inflation
- (d) An increase in the national minimum wage

[1]

Similar to Question 1 this question was testing whether candidates could distinguish between economic factors and other factors in the external business environment. The correct answer to this question is answer (d) an increase in the national minimum wage – this is a legal/political factor, not an economic one. The most common answer given by candidates by far was answer (b), a reduction in unemployment. This possibly suggests that candidates are confusing the meaning of the term ‘economic’ (as in relating to the economy of the country) with the meaning of ‘economical’ or the need to ‘economise’.

	<b>Misconception</b>	A common misconception is that the term ‘economic’ refers to the need to save money or the tightening of the financial belt. This is not the case. The meaning of the term on this specification always relates to the economy of a country, usually the UK. The term should not be confused with the terms ‘economical’ or ‘economise’.
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## Question 10

10 A games console manufacturer has calculated the following:

- raw material costs: £50 per console
- labour costs: £17 million per annum
- overheads: £93 million per annum.

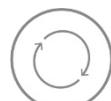
If the average selling price of a games console is £160, the break-even level of output would be:

- (a) 100 000 consoles  
(b) 110 000 consoles  
(c) 1 million consoles  
(d) 10 million consoles

[1]

This question was testing the ability to calculate breakeven. The question was poorly answered, with very few candidates giving the correct answer, (c) 1 million consoles. While on a multiple-choice question it is impossible to determine why, some workings provide an insight. A large number of candidates wrote down an incorrect formula for calculating break-even, the most common errors being an inversion of the formula or an addition of selling price and variable cost. Of those who wrote down the correct formula but selected the incorrect answer, their workings show poor manipulation of the number of zeros, hence making a power of ten error.

	<b>AfL</b>	The financial figures that businesses deal with are usually in the thousands or millions. These numbers contain lots of zeros. Centres are advised to get candidates to do a quick estimation of the magnitude of the answer before doing the actual calculation. This way if their calculation is not of the magnitude expected, say 89 when an answer in the region of 1000 was expected, they are alerted to check for a power of ten error.
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## Question 15

15 The cash flow forecast for Everett Ltd is shown below.

	July	August	September
<b>Cash inflows</b>	£22 000	£15 000	£25 000
<b>Cash outflows</b>	£15 000	£22 000	£18 000
<b>Net cash flow</b>	£7 000	(£7 000)	£7 000
<b>Opening balance</b>	£7 000	£14 000	£7 000
<b>Closing balance</b>	£14 000	£7 000	£14 000

The forecast shows that the company:

- (a) does not predict cash flow problems
- (b) expects to make a profit of £7 000
- (c) predicts that net cash flow will be constant
- (d) will need an overdraft of £14 000


[1]

This question was testing a candidate's ability to interpret a cash flow forecast. The correct answer to this question is answer (a). The most common answer was (b); this is incorrect. This suggests that candidates are still confusing cash flow and profit.

	<b>Misconception</b>	<p>A common misconception among learners is that profit and cash flow are the same thing. This is not the case. A business may be highly profitable but still encounter cash flow difficulties. A simple example, say of a builder, should make the point clear to candidates. During the building of the house the builder has to pay out for cement, bricks, wood, etc. and may encounter cash flow difficulties; however, when the house is complete and eventually sold the builder should make a good profit.</p>
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## Question 20

20 Which of the following is a correct definition of the term 'remuneration'?

- (a) An unnecessary risk
- (b) Financial reward
- (c) Non-monetary payment
- (d) Shortlisting applicants

[1]

The term 'remuneration' is in the specification (teaching content 2.1 exemplification) however few candidates knew the meaning of the term. The correct answer to this question is answer (b). By far the most common answer was answer (c). Given this is a multiple-choice question it is impossible to work out what the misconception may be.

## Question 21

21 Describe **one** way a business that you have researched sells its products.

**Name of business** .....

**Activity of business** .....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

[2]

This question tests knowledge and understanding of a business functional area (bullet point five of the pre-release research brief), in this case the sales function.

Most candidates were able to score at least one mark. The most common correct answers were 'sell online' or 'sell instore'. To gain full marks the answer needed to be contextual e.g. 'sells its groceries online'.

Answers about advertising and promotion could not be given as these relate to the marketing functional area rather than the sales function.

## Question 22

22 Explain **two** ways a business that you have researched uses mobile technology.

**Name of business**.....

**Activity of business**.....

1 .....

.....

.....

2 .....

.....

.....

[4]

To achieve marks on this question the candidate response need to be talking about mobile technology, rather than technology in general. An excellent range of suggestions were made, giving evidence that many candidates had undertaken significant research into this aspect of the specification. The best answers related to specific types of mobile technology e.g. a text message to inform customers of the date their clothing order would be delivered or an app to order a takeaway.

Those that did not achieve highly tended to give vague answers about technology in general – reference to use of the internet or being online were insufficient.

## Question 23

23 Identify **four** ways a business that you have researched complies with the Data Protection Act.

**Name of business** .....

**Activity of business** .....

1 .....

2 .....

3 .....

4 .....

[4]

A very good knowledge of the requirements of data protection legislation was shown by the vast majority of candidates. While some candidates gave the answers in legal terms e.g. not keeping the data longer than is necessary, many others gave the answer in practical terms as befits a vocational qualification e.g. delete out of date data on a monthly basis. Either approach is acceptable.

## Question 24

- 24** Analyse **one** advantage and **one** disadvantage to a business that you have researched of raising finance through crowd-funding.

**Name of business** .....

**Activity of business** .....

**Advantage** .....

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**Disadvantage** .....

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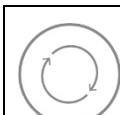
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[6]

This question stems directly from the third bullet of the pre-issued research brief. Many candidates gave vague or inaccurate answers and needed to show clearer knowledge of crowd-funding as a source of finance. In addition some candidates discussed what the money raised was spent on, rather than answering the question set i.e. the advantages and disadvantages of the method.



**AfL**

Centres are advised to spend adequate time considering this relatively new form of business finance, since it is becoming increasingly popular with businesses today.

## Question 25

- 25** Explain how a business that you have researched resolved a conflict with an external stakeholder group.

**Name of business**.....

**Activity of business .....**

### **External stakeholder group**

[4]

This question stems directly from the second bullet on this series' pre-issued research brief. Most candidates were able to achieve at least half marks on this question. To gain full marks the answer needed to be contextual. Many wrote at considerable length and gave considerable detail. The best answers concentrated on how the conflict was resolved, rather than on the cause of the conflict.

Those who scored zero either did not identify a specific external stakeholder group, or they named an internal stakeholder group e.g. employees. Such answers could not be rewarded.

## Question 26 (a)

- 26** Malik is an internal stakeholder of *Huxley Library*.

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term 'internal stakeholder'.

50

[2]

Most candidates appeared to have some understanding of the meaning of the term ‘internal stakeholder’, although many had difficulty expressing it. The vast majority of candidates achieved at least one mark. To achieve full marks the answer needed to be technically accurate. Examples could not be given as they were not required by the question.

## Question 26 (b)

- (b) Identify **two** stakeholder objectives Malik is likely to have as manager of *Huxley Library*.

1.....  
.....

2.....  
.....

[2]

Candidates gave a wide array of answers. As long as the answers were aspirational (rather than tasks Malik must perform on a daily basis as part of his job) they were given.

The most common correct answers were 'meeting the needs of the local community', 'improving employee retention' and 'being paid a fair wage'.

## Question 27 (a)

- 27 *Huxley Library's* cost data for 2017 is shown below.

Fixed costs:

- salaries £9000 per month
- premises overheads £16 000 per quarter
- administrative overheads £7000 per annum

Variable costs (average per library-user visit):

- reading materials £0.33 per visit
- wages £0.97 per visit

- (a) State what is meant by each of the following terms:

Fixed costs .....

.....

Variable costs .....

.....

[2]

This question dichotomised candidates. While many candidates gained full marks, many others erroneously thought that a fixed cost is simply one that does not change (over time) whereas a variable cost does. All costs change, the key to gaining the marks for this question was understanding that it is whether the cost is affected by the level of output, or even better for this particular business, the number of library users. Those candidates who grasped the concept that it depends on output, even if they stated it in an out-of-context manner e.g. greater production or more sales, were given the marks since the question wording did not require the answer to directly relate to the library.

	<b>Misconception</b>	A very common misconception is that fixed costs do not change. All costs change over time. The term 'fixed costs' refers to costs that are unaffected by levels of output/sales/number of service users; for example rent or rates which need to be paid irrespective of output levels
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## Question 27 (b)

(b) Calculate *Huxley Library's* total fixed costs for 2017.

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[2]

Most candidates made a good attempt at this calculation and achieved at least one of the two available marks. In previous series candidates have been encouraged to show their workings and this series the advice appears to have been heeded. Very few candidates solely wrote down the answer, instead they showed their workings. This is good examination technique and, where necessary, allowed examiners to give credit for the method used even when the final answer was incorrect.

Those candidates who did not achieve marks did not take account of the time frames of the costs given in the question. Salaries were per month, premises per quarter and administrative overheads per annum.

	<b>AfL</b>	Centres are advised to give candidates plenty of practice at calculating costs with different and varying time frame references e.g. daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually.
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	<b>Misconception</b>	One common error to look out for in candidate calculations is when manipulating quarterly cost. Instead of multiplying by four to get the annual cost, many candidates erroneously multiply by three (presumably because a quarter is three months).
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## Question 27 (c)

- (c) The total number of library-user visits in 2017 was 30 000.

Calculate *Huxley Library's* total variable costs for 2017.

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[2]

The vast majority of candidates were able to correctly calculate variable costs and gain full marks. Of those who didn't the most common error was to omit the pound sign. The pound sign is required to show an understanding that the figure calculated is a financial cost (rather than, say, visitor numbers or output).

	<b>AfL</b>	Centres are advised to stress to candidates the importance of stating the correct units when giving the answer to any numerical calculation. Depending on the question, it could cost them a mark.
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## Question 28

- 28** Using the data in **Figs. 1 & 2** and any other relevant information, assess *Huxley Library's* non-financial performance in 2017.

[12]

Some aspects of the library's non-financial performance were good, some aspects were bad. The question required candidates to show their knowledge, understanding and analytical skill when interpreting the research results, culminating in an overall judgment as to the library's non-financial performance.

Candidates need to be able to:

- (1) identify pertinent points e.g. 95% of users rated staff as helpful (Level 1)
- (2) show understanding of data e.g. staff helpfulness was rated 15% higher than the national average (Level 2)
- (3) suggest the impacts of the above e.g. leading to an improved reputation (Level 3) or more visitors (Level 3).

Then attempt a conclusion which brings the various good points and bad points together to reach a justified judgement. Those who reached an overall decision with valid reasoning scored a minimum of 10 marks.

In the main candidates did well on this question, showing accurate interpretation of the numerical data. When answers went off track it was because the response strayed into suggesting improvements. The question is a data-response question, i.e. what does the data show. The data does not suggest the solutions, only the issues that need to be addressed. As such, solutions could not be awarded and were annotated NAQ (not answered question) by the examiner.

## Question 29 (a)

29 *Huxley Library* has a centralised organisational structure.

- (a) Identify **two** advantages to *Huxley Library* of having a centralised organisational structure.

Advantage 1 .....

Advantage 2 .....

[2]

The examiner was looking for explicit understanding of the advantages of centralisation from the business's perspective. This question was designed to stretch the most able, and it worked well in achieving this goal. Misconceptions were many and varied, however the most fundamental appears to be that candidates did not have an accurate understanding of centralisation and, therefore, could not move on to give an advantage. Some who did appear to understand the concept of centralisation gave a definition rather than an advantage. Those who did give an advantage (and there were few) also tended to give them from the wrong point of view e.g. advantage to the manager or employee, rather than to the business as the question demanded.

Many candidates seemed to assume that a centralised organisational structure was synonymous with a tall hierarchical structure. With this misconception it was unlikely they could move on to supply a valid advantage. The best answers seen related to the decision made being of benefit to the entire organisation (rather than one functional area) or decision-makers having had training in the use of Gantt charts or other scheduling tools so they could make better decisions.

	<b>AfL</b>	Candidates appear to find questions on organisational structure (whether tall, flat, centralised, decentralised, by location, by product, etc.) extremely difficult. This may well be because the concept is abstract to them and beyond their life experience. Centres are advised to allocate sufficient time in the programme of study to help candidates have a sound understanding of the impact of various organisational structures on a business and its workforce.
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## Question 29 (b)

- (b) Identify **two** disadvantages to the library assistants of working in an organisation with a centralised structure.

Disadvantage 1 .....

.....  
Disadvantage 2 .....

[2]

Candidates appeared to find this question slightly easier than 29(a); presumably because it was from the employees' perspective. Many valid suggestions were received including 'not having a say', 'feeling demotivated' and 'a lack of empowerment'.

## Question 30

- 30 Findings from research conducted by Alphashire County Council in February have now been made available. The research has identified the following changes in *Huxley Library's* local demographics:

- an increase in the birth rate
- an increase in the proportion of families with low incomes
- an increase in the number of families that are not fluent in the English language.

Recommend how Anna should alter the service provision at *Huxley Library* in response to changes in the local demographics. Justify your answer.

[12]

Candidates made lots of suggestions as to how the library should respond to the bullet-pointed demographic changes. In addition, most suggestions were contextual e.g. more books for babies, English language classes, multi-lingual signage, audio books for language learning etc. This shows really useful, practical thinking.

Those who scored most highly were able to analyse their suggestions e.g. use the reading room for children's story time is likely to increase the number of visitors to the library and may increase children's book loans (Level 3).

Few candidates attempted a conclusion or any judgement as to why their recommendations would be so beneficial. For a Level 4 mark, examiners were looking for a justification as to why all the suggestion made were appropriate or why one or more of the suggestions was more appropriate than the other(s).

	<b>Misconception</b>	<p>A very common misconception is that a 'recommend' question does not need an overall judgement or conclusion. A 'recommend' question does need a judgment or conclusion. Not to attempt one is poor examination technique. Centres are advised to encourage candidates to always include a reasoned judgement for their recommendations. The easiest way is to select one of the suggestions and explain why it is better than the other suggestions, however there are other ways and the candidate is free to evaluate in any way that answers the question set.</p>
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## Question 31

- 31** Evaluate the benefits and drawbacks to *Huxley Library* of being a government-owned organisation.

[12]

Despite being a question about the public sector the question was answered well. There was clear evidence from many candidates that they understood that the business was funded by the government through taxation and was not-for-profit.

Lower ability candidates were able to use information from the text e.g. amounts of paperwork, limited flexibility and lack of innovation to access marks. Many were able to explain how the strengths/weaknesses identified arose (Level 2) or the impact on stakeholders (also Level 2).

Those who were able to suggest the impact on the library of these benefits and drawbacks gained Level 3. By far the most common analytical point was that the library might experience a cut in funding (Level 1) due to changes in the political agenda (Level 2) leading to the library having to close down (Level 3); better answers referred to the library falling into a state of disrepair (Level 3) or failing to meet consumer needs due to carrying out of date stock (Level 3).

Most candidates did attempt a conclusion. However, many 'sat on the fence' declaring there to be benefits and drawbacks; such is indicated by the question. To gain Level 4 marks the candidate needed to choose whether being government-owned is an overall benefit or a drawback to the library, and support their decision with at least one valid reason. Those that gave a contextual reason were rewarded with high marks i.e. an eleven or a twelve.

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