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A LEVEL

Examiners' report

BUSINESS

H431

For first teaching in 2015

H431/03 Summer 2024 series

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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. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. 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 and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 3 series overview

This examination requires candidates to apply their answers to the business in the resource booklet, in this case Tropicana. The business context was very well understood, and it was clear that most, if not all candidates were familiar with Tropicana at some level.

Candidates were able to apply their knowledge, not only to Tropicana's products, but more widely to the industry, including the global aspects of this industry. Most candidates referenced the number and variety of countries that Tropicana operates within and there was good understanding of the business environment.

Most candidates did not have any timing issues and attempted all of the questions. Where some questions had a greater number of 'no response', this was most likely due to a lack of knowledge for that topic (for example in Question 6 which was about Ansoff's Matrix).

Although most candidates were able to use the context of Tropicana well in the longer questions, this was sometimes forgotten about in the shorter questions, most of which also required context to gain all of the marks.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:

applied their answers to Tropicana in the longer questions (Questions 4, 6 and 10)

- improved use of evaluation throughout a response in the longer questions, reducing the need for such a long conclusion
- used some aspects of the context very well, such as the countries that are part of Tropicana's supply chain
- attempted to answer all the numeric questions (Questions 2, 8 (a) and 8 (b))
- were selective over their use of points in Questions 4 and 9 especially. There is not enough time to cover every relevant point to the standard required, so the best candidates choose which two or three points to focus on.

Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:

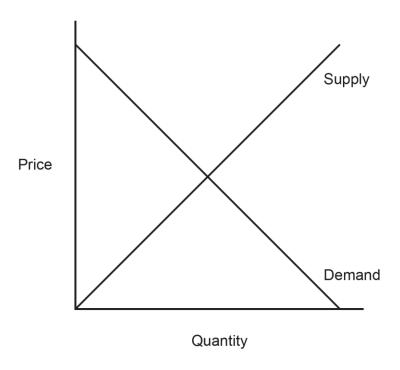
- a lack of application for lower mark questions (Questions 5, 7 and 8 (c))
- did not always fully read the question. For example, on Question 1, it was not uncommon for candidates to reference hurricane Irma, despite the question being about the effects of increased health consciousness
- attempted to cover too many points in a 20-mark question. Only two fully developed chains of analysis are required to gain all the AO3 marks, so two or three points (analysed well) are enough to gain all the AO3 marks
- a lack of knowledge of the Ansoff's matrix prevented some candidates form being able to access any marks in Question 6
- too much time spent on definitions, often in introductions that do not add to the response. A definition can show good knowledge, but by using a term in the right way, this knowledge is shown anyway.

Question 1

1 People are becoming more health conscious. (line 16)

Analyse the impact of this trend on demand and supply in Tropicana's market.

You may use the diagram in the space below as part of your answer, but it is not required to gain full marks.



The key to understanding this question was to understand the relationship between supply and demand. Many candidates chose to ignore the diagram and explained in prose the likely changes to supply and/or demand. This was perfectly acceptable and there were some excellent answers that achieved full marks without using the diagram.

Those candidates who did use the diagram, often found their analysis to be slightly easier. A well-drawn and annotated supply and demand diagram can show two distinct analytical effects; a change in price and a change in quantity. Candidates who showed this on a graph and used their written answer to take this analysis further, often had more concise, and yet better answers.

Some candidates seemed to ignore the stem of the question (people are becoming more health conscious) and it was not unusual for a candidate to attempt to analyse the effects of hurricane Irma on supply and demand and not answer the question.

Any shift in supply or demand could be credited as a correct answer, depending on how the candidate interpreted the graph. Seen as a graph that only represents Tropicana, the most common answer was that demand would increase/shift to the right, due to customers seeing Tropicana's products as 'healthy'. However, some candidates decided that Tropicana, being a fruity, sugary drink, would not be seen as health and therefore demand would fall. Either of these answers, explained in context could have gained full marks.

Likewise, if a candidate saw the diagram as representing the entire industry, the increase in people becoming more health conscious may attract new businesses into the market, therefore having an impact on supply. Again, explained in context, this could also lead to a full mark answer.

As with many Business questions, the validity of the answer depends on the context, how that is interpreted and the particular perspective used in the analysis.

Assessment for learning



Reading and fully understanding the question is an essential skill for a candidate in this examination. Too often, candidates skim read a question and start writing their answer, without actually knowing what the question is asking.

In this question, it was obvious that some candidates did not read the stem of the question, and this often led to an answer which had some good business theoretical knowledge but was not answering the question set.

Question 2

2	Using the information in Extract C , calculate the price elasticity of demand for orange juice in 2017.		
	[2]		

Price elasticity of demand can be done poorly by Business candidates, and it was pleasing to see a significant number of correct answers.

The calculation itself was not difficult, especially when using a calculator.

A few candidates still managed to find a wrong answer, despite having the correct numbers in the correct formula. This was most likely due to candidates mistyping something on their calculator, not having a calculator, or simply misreading the answer.

The most common mistake was for candidates to invert the formula. Candidates who clearly showed their working could still gain a mark for their use of the correct numbers. However, some candidates chose to not show their working, which is always risky as a wrong answer cannot gain any process marks.

Question 3

3	State two factors that need to be addressed when using the McKinsey 7–S change managem model.	ent
	1	
	2	[2]

This is the only question on this examination that does not require the candidate to apply their answer to Tropicana. All that is required for this question is knowledge of McKinsey's 7-s change management model.

The most common answers were strategy, skills and staff.

It was fairly obvious that some candidates did not know this model. Sensible candidates had a guess at a relevant 'S', with the most common incorrect answer as 'supply'.

Question 4*

4* Discuss problems Tropicana might face when managing its global logistics.

[20]

There tended to be two different approaches used by candidates to answer this question.

The first, and best, approach was from candidates who had a reasonable understanding of logistics and could focus in on the logistical problems faced by Tropicana. These usually included their importing, exporting and transportation of oranges. The most common approach was to analyse the potential logistical problems that Tropicana might face and then to evaluate the degree of effect or significance of these problems.

The second approach was for candidates to take a different approach and find as many problems facing Tropicana as possible, some of which might have been logistical. This approach meant that candidate covered far more than just logistics and often candidates tried to do too much in their answer. This often led to low AO4 (evaluation) marks as the candidate was unable to come to judgement about just the logistical elements of their answer.

The best responses had a fairly simple structure to the answer. Most would include a definition of the term 'logistics' which enabled the candidate to show what their answer was focussed upon.

Good candidates had at least two analytical points. They would take a logistical problem, explain why it is a particular problem for Tropicana (use the context) and then analyse the effects of this problem, usually on the costs/revenue/reputation and profit of Tropicana.

While candidates have improved their analytical skills in recent years, evaluation is still relatively rare. Some candidates seem to have little idea of how to evaluate and this leads to lower marks that might have been anticipated.

40% of the marks for this question come from evaluation. So, a response with no evaluation, can only gain a maximum of 12 marks in a 20 mark question.

It is not uncommon for candidates to leave all of their evaluation until the end of their response (as a conclusion). While a conclusion is an important part of an answer to an evaluative question, expecting one paragraph at the end of a response to have enough detail to gain 40% of the marks is unreasonable in most cases.

The best evaluation occurs when a candidate takes an evaluative perspective from the start of their answer. These candidates analyse a point and then evaluate it straightaway. For example, one logistical problem facing Tropicana is the movement of perishable oranges. Most candidates used this point and the majority were able to analyse the likely effects on tropicana of having good logistics that make this possible, or the issues arising from not having effective logistics.

However, it was relatively rare to find an answer that evaluated the extent of this specific problem to Tropicana. For example, being a global business worth \$3.3billion, Tropicana may have the financial power to overcome these issues with the capital items that they own (such as refrigerated trucks and shipping containers).

Candidates who evaluate each point, leave themselves in a good position, when it comes to making a final evaluation, because they can easily reference the other evaluative points they have made earlier in the response.

Exemplar 1

In my o arevall the hisgest problem Trapicano
may face when managing global logicrics is me
impour on the eminament. By sourcing changes
from the US or Brazil, to would the costy and take
larger, comban emissions would inverse when transporting
the oranges his Mous to therefore this could negatively
Impact their wand linage, leading so a substantial
decrease in costs, and therefore boning or decreasing
their mories.

In the Exemplar 1 conclusion above, the candidate had made evaluative points after each analytical point made. This meant that the only aspect left at the end of the response was to come to judgement over the 'biggest' problem, which they did in the conclusion above.

Question 5

5	Refe		

Explain two ways Tropicana could further improve its corporate social responsibility (CSR) profile.
1
2
[4]

There are many ways in which a business can improve its corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the majority of candidates were able to identify relevant ways, such as by reducing the use of carbon capture, replacing plastic bottles with glass and any other relevant way.

However, the responses to this question needed to be in the context of Tropicana and this is the aspect some candidates found difficult. To an extent, this depended on the improvement that the candidate states. It is very easy to contextualise less use of plastic, since much of Tropicana's output is sold in bottles. However, carbon capture was suggested by many candidates, but very few were able to put this into the context of Tropicana.

Assessment for learning



Candidates often miss the basics of questions. However, each question is an instruction to a candidate, that, if followed correctly, will lead to full marks. Some questions have a specific context upon which the answer has been based.

In this case, the question reads 'Explain two ways Tropicana could.....', and therefore a candidate must apply their answer to the context of Tropicana. If the question does not mention a business name or a specific stakeholder, then the answer either has no AO2 marks (for example question 3) or the candidate can choose their own context from the examples they have encountered in their studies.

Almost all questions on this paper relate specifically to the resource booklet, and to gain all the marks, the context must be used.

Question 6

6 Refer to Extract G.

Evaluate **one** way Tropicana may have used Ansoff's Matrix in its decision to launch Tropicana Crunch. [10]

A significant proportion of candidates gained no marks for this question, because no knowledge of Ansoff's Matrix was identified. Most candidates had a go at an answer, but some confused the model with the Boston Matrix, while others attempted to analyse the decision, without using the model.

A few candidates did know parts of Ansoff's matrix, but often misidentified a particular quadrant. Alternatively understanding that Ansoff's Matrix is used to measure risk was also a valid point and some candidates were able to analyse the level of risk in their answer.

The most common quadrant used was diversification (new product/new market). While the decision to launch Tropicana Crunch might be seen as diversification, it could also have been categorised as any of the other quadrants, depending on the perspective chosen, and this proved a superb source of evaluation for candidates who had a solid understanding of the model.

I don't know how to revise for Business

This was one of the most common statements I heard from students before their examinations. For many subjects there is a clear body of theory and models to know before attempting the examination.

However, students do not always focus on this body of knowledge for A Level Business. Instead, some focus on their analysis and evaluative skills and sometimes ignore models such as Ansoff's Matrix.

Many answers to this question had great structure, good analytical points and evaluation throughout. However, they achieved no marks because there was no knowledge of Ansoff's Matrix.

All four Assessment Objectives are equally important, and a candidate can not gain any marks without relevant knowledge. Learning this body of knowledge is where some candidates should spend more time revising.

Refer to Extract H.

[4]

Question 7

Explain two possible methods Tropicana could use to select seasonal staff.
1

-		

This question asks for candidates to explain (specifically for Tropicana) two possible selection methods. Therefore, to answer the question, candidates needed to understand the difference between selection and recruitment. However, many did not.

Selection methods are those used to narrow down people who have already applied for the job.

The most common correct answer here were CV, interview and work trial – all of which can be used to select the best/most appropriate applicant.

The next challenge for candidates was to apply these to the context of Tropicana and the question even instructs candidates where to look within the Resource Booklet (Extract H). This extract gives a number of hints, or signposts which can be helpful to a candidate in finding the selection methods which can be easily contextualised. For example, the text states 'some of the seasonal tasks include 'general clean up, sorting, moving loads of fruit'. Therefore, the selection method should be one where the business can distinguish applicants who can do these roles. From these examples, 'a work trial, to see if the applicants can move loads of fruit', would demonstrate the knowledge of a selection method and contextualise it in a very short sentence.

Misconception



Candidates often start by asking themselves what knowledge I have, and then find the application that fits this. However, the best candidates do this the other way round. They read the Resource Booklet and then use the context to narrow down the answers to ones that can be easily applied. This is the approach we would all use in our everyday lives. For example, you might decide you want pizza for tea, but if you do not have any pizza (and no way to get one delivered) then this will just lead to disappointment. Better to have a look in the cupboards first, see what is available, and then pick from what is there. The same is true with A level Business answers – see what is most relevant for the business and then pick your answer from these.

11

Question 8 (a)

8 Esmagamento de Suco (EDS), based in Brazil, owns a large number of orange farms and sells its produce in bulk to firms such as Tropicana. EDS's oranges go through a series of operations before they are transported.

EDS is considering investing in a new 'orange picker' – an important piece of production equipment.

Year	Net return (in Brazilian Reals)
0	(5850000)
1	1 800 000
2	2100000
3	2100000
4	2100000

(a) Calculate the ARR for the new orange picker over its anticipated 4-year life.

Show your workings.	

Quantitative questions, such as this one, are tackled in many different ways by candidates. Most candidates were unable to gain all of the marks, but they could be rewarded for the correct stages of their calculation as long as the examiner could follow their answer.

A few candidates thought this question asked for the payback period and it was not uncommon to see a calculation of how long it would take EDS to pay for the machine.

Where candidates did know some of the stages of ARR, one stage was often missed out: finding the net cash flow (i.e. subtracting the cost in Year 0). As long as the examiner can see the omission of this stage, and then follow the logic of the rest of the answer, this could have resulted in two marks.

Some candidates had an issue with their calculation, where they either wrote the wrong answer down for a stage, mis-calculated a decimal place or sometimes missed making the final answer into a percentage. Again, as long as the examiner can clearly see where these mistakes are made, then some marks (based on the own figure rule, OFR) can still be awarded.

13

Question 8 (b)

There are three orange picking seasons each year in EDS's region of Brazil – high, low, then middle – based on the number of oranges grown in that area.

The table below shows EDS's output of oranges since 2022.

Year	Season	Number of crates of oranges	Trend (3-period moving average)
2022	High	13881	
	Low	7894	11 003
	Middle	11 233	11 292
2023	High	14750	
	Low	7677	11 143
	Middle	11 002	11 000
2024	High	14322	

(b) Calculate the variation for the high season in 2023.

Show your workings.
rol
[3]

To correctly answer this question, candidates needed to have a good understanding of how to use time series analysis. There were many places where mistakes could be made. The most common of which was the numbers upon which the three-period moving average was based.

Many candidates tried to use the three 'high' season results. Some candidates were able to average these three and even subtract this from the actual number of crates to give an answer. This was obviously not the right use of numbers, but the other stages, if correct, could have been awarded as OFRs. This can only be done if a candidate sets out their working clearly and logically.

14

The other common mistake here, was for candidates to find the correct trend for High 2024 (11 220) but then not do anything else with their answer. Obviously, this deserves partial credit, but by not doing the final stages, the candidate has not answered the question.

Some candidates wrote their answer for the trend in the table. There is no issue with using the table in this way, but the answer should also appear in the answer space as well. There was also an issue occasionally, with random numbers being written all over the answer space, with no clear logic or order. If the answer is correct, then this is usually, easily spotted by the examiner. However, if the answer has a mistake, then it makes it very difficult for the examiner to follow the logic of the answer if it not set out logically.

Question 8 (c)

In the high season, the number of oranges grown is at its peak and EDS believes that its picking operation currently operates at about 80% capacity utilisation. This means a 16-hour day operation, six days a week, with staff working eight-hour shifts. The seventh day is for cleaning and maintenance.

(c)	Analyse two possible problems for EDS if it attempts to increase its high season capacity utilisation to 100%.
	[6]

This question specifically refers to EDS, not Tropicana. Therefore, the answer should be relevant and applied to EDS. Since the raw materials (oranges) are the same for both EDS and Tropicana, this did not lead to many issues, but candidates must make sure they know the focus of their answer, otherwise they might find their analysis is out of context.

The context in the stem of the question gives some clear signposts to the most relevant answers. Candidates who read, understood and used this data were far more likely to gain more than the two knowledge marks for this question. Without application, analysis marks cannot be awarded.

The most obvious pieces of context were the 16 hour day and the seventh day left for cleaning. So candidates who used these pieces of context gave the most common answers of overworking/demotivating the employees (because they may need to work longer that their 8 hour shifts) and the likelihood of machines breaking down because they no longer have the 'seventh' day to clean and maintain.

Analysis required candidates to show the impact of the problem they have identified on EDS. Some candidates were unable to do this and went no further than AO1 and AO2.

Exemplar 2

One problem for EDS is it attempts to increase
it's high season capatority utilization 1001/18
the labour output . Increasing capacity utilization
means that the laborus shipts will be
increased to roughly 9.6 hour ships with
operation days increasing to 19.7. This mans
all workers well become more tired while
working and the quality of work may not
be as high,

Exemplar 2 is an example of a candidate who identified a relevant problem (the workforce/labour becoming tired), contextualised this using the data for EDS (increasing from 8 hours to 9.6 hours – adding 20%), but then there is not analysis of the impact of this problem on EDS.

This is a common mistake by candidates, who often do not take their answer far enough. Candidates may assume that the examiner will take their answer forward without them having to write it. It would be fairly easy to see that a more tired workforce could lead to lower quality, but there is not attempt to analyse why this is bad for EDS. I suspect the candidates knew how to analyse the impact of this on EDS, but they did not write it.

Misconception



Candidates do not always take a point as far as it can go in terms of analysis.

Demonstrating the skill of analysis is like walking up a set of stairs. The candidate starts with a simple effect, such as workers being more tired above. That is the first step and to fully analyse this, the candidate needs to walk up each step in a logical order. For example, the tiredness might lead to poor quality – which might lead to lower customer satisfaction, which might lead to lower sales – lower revenue – lower profit margins, and so on. If every analytical point is walked up the stairs, point by point, then the answer is likely to achieve all of the analysis marks on offer.

Question 9*

9* Evaluate the extent to which the external environment is likely to affect the marketing activities of Tropicana. [20]

This question has a wide range of possible answers, and any external influence could have been relevant to the answer. The best candidates used the data in the Resource Booklet to focus their answers on the ones that were most applicable to Tropicana.

The best responses did not try and go through every external influence. Instead, good candidates focussed on the two or three most relevant external influences and fully analysed each of these points, in context. Candidates who attempted to do more external influences, often ran out time for good evaluation or had such superficial analysis that it rarely achieved more than 1 or 2 AO3 marks.

The external influences that candidates found easiest to contextualise were economic changes found in different countries and social factors, such as the increase in people being health conscious. There were plenty of other external influences that could be used and, as long as a candidate was able to justify it, there was no 'right' answer that was being sought.

As with any 20 mark question on this examination, 40% of the marks are for evaluation. Therefore, it is not unreasonable for 40% of the response to also focus on evaluation. Most candidates are unable to do this in a final paragraph/conclusion, so there is a need to evaluate through the response. The easiest way to do this is often to analyse a point in terms of how it might affect Tropicana, and then to evaluate the extent of that effect. If each point includes analysis and evaluation, then the final paragraph only needs to make a judgement over which influence is most likely to effect Tropicana with some justification.

Overall, this was often a candidate's best answer on this examination and allowed good candidates to showcase their abilities in all four skill areas.

Exemplar 3

One external factor which is usely to affect the maneting activities of Tropicana is the economy. The current economic state is going to affect the price at which Tropicana price their products for example, during times of inflation, Tropicana may set their prices higher in order to cover the higher costs the business may have faced due to inhation and to be able to pay Tropicana employees a higher wage due to the current economic situation, as during inflation the cost of living will most likely increase as product are now more expensive. This will affect the manuting activities of Tropicana to a greatile extent during different economic states as it mey do not adjust their prices accordingly, Tropicana may snuggle to cover costs of production during inhation which could have senous impact on their cash flow. However, the economy is unuitely to affect Tropicana's manusting activities toomuch as they were recently sold at \$3.3 billion so are unlikely to expenence cash from issues.

Exemplar 3 above is an example of a point made in response to this question. It contains each of the Assessment Objectives and is a good example of how a point can be developed.

The candidate starts by identifying an external influence (the economy). There is an explanation of how the economy might affect a business (through inflation). You will note that the candidate does not attempt to explain every possible economic effect (interest rates, recession etc), they use a simple and relatable example of inflation affecting wages – this is enough to make their point.

What follows is a clear and logical chain of analysis (higher wages – increased costs and increased prices in the economy – Tropicana might struggle to cover costs/break-even – impact on cashflow). This is not every step in the chain of analysis, but it is enough to show how Tropicana might be affected.

Lastly the candidate does some simple, but effective evaluation by stating that this is unlikely to have a big effect on Tropicana because of their size and this also includes some application by using the figures from the Resource Booklet.

Candidates who can develop a point, within which each Assessment Objective is demonstrated are far more likely to gain a high mark on these 20 mark question.

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