

**CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)**

**Examiners' report**

**BUSINESS**

**05834–05837, 05878**

**Unit 1 January 2025 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. 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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

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## Unit 1 series overview

This series has seen some good responses relating to sustainability and/or not operating sustainably (as illustrated by responses to Questions 27 (a) and (b)). Examiners have also seen further improvement in candidates' understanding of organisational structure (as illustrated by responses to Question 28). However, yet again, Learning Objective 7 appears to be an area of the specification for which candidates are not fully prepared. In particular, Learning Objective 7.2 (sources of finance) as highlighted by responses to Question 22. In addition, Learning Objective 1 relating to forms of ownership (as highlighted by responses to Question 31) is a topic which candidates appear to have difficulty assimilating and is, therefore, worthy of extra attention. In contrast, questions relating to legislation which have seen poor performance in previous sessions, performed as expected this year (see Questions 12 and 24).

As ever, those candidates who showed a sound understanding across the breadth of the specification, coupled with an ability to analyse and evaluate, did well on this paper.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>researched a wide variety of businesses, targeted to the research brief (for Section B)</li> <li>demonstrated numerical skill (in Questions 26 (b) and 30) and the ability to interpret data in tabular form (Questions 13 and 20)</li> <li>answered questions contextually (in Sections B and C)</li> <li>made judgements supported by justified reasoning (Section C extended response questions).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>left multiple choice answer spaces entirely blank or selected multiple responses</li> <li>showed little evidence of studying the topics indicated in the pre-release research brief (particularly evident was a lack of knowledge of a credit card as a form of finance (Question 22))</li> <li>ended extended response questions abruptly, without making an overall judgement</li> <li>demonstrated confused knowledge of the differences between private limited companies and public limited companies (Question 31).</li> </ul>

Section A gives time for candidates to settle into the exam. This section of the paper was generally well answered by most candidates. Once again, a minority of candidates lost marks because they ticked two or more responses, say A and D. Such hedging cannot be awarded. 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. In addition, some candidates lost marks by leaving an MCQ entirely blank. This is poor examination technique. Candidates should be encouraged to indicate a response to all 20 questions.

Section B continues to be less well answered than might be expected, especially given the guidance on areas to focus on in the pre-issued research brief for this examination. Some weaker scripts made no attempt at answering any of the Section B questions. Centres are advised to devote adequate time to the preparation of candidates for Section B of this paper. The research brief for each series is specific to that series and is issued well in advance of the examination. It is the one section of the paper where candidates can prepare in advance of the examination.

### How the research brief linked to the questions in Section B

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting the objectives of external stakeholders.</li>   <li>• How businesses comply with the Consumer Rights Act.</li>   <li>• SWOT analysis in action.</li>   <li>• Operational responses to rising levels of disposable income.</li>   <li>• The use of short-term sources of finance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question 23 Identify one objective of each of the following stakeholders:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ customers</li> <li>○ central government.</li> </ul> <p>In each case, analyse an impact on a business you have researched of meeting this objective.</p> </li> <li>• Question 24 Outline two ways a business you have researched complies with the Consumer Rights Act.</li>   <li>• Question 21 Using SWOT analysis, identify two threats to a business that you have researched.</li>   <li>• Question 25 Describe ways a business you have researched has responded to rising levels of disposable income.</li>   <li>• Question 22 Explain one advantage and one disadvantage to a business that you have researched of using a credit card as a source of finance.</li> </ul>
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The wording of Questions 24 and 25 linked extremely closely with the wording of the pre-issued research brief, however some candidates still showed very limited knowledge or understanding. Centres are advised to emphasise to candidates the importance of focussing their business research and revision 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 did less well than those who selected a business according to the question. Candidates should be encouraged to select 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 needed to have used a credit card and for Question 24 where the business needed to have complied with the Consumer Rights Act.

As always, 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.

### Analytical skill (Level 3)

Analysis requires candidates to develop their answers to include impacts on the business/business owners.

It should be noted that phrases such as 'this will change the firm's reputation' (Question 27 (b)), 'this will affect motivation' (Question 29) or 'this will impact on capital' (Question 31), cannot be awarded because the direction of the impact is unclear. Candidates need to make explicit the direction of the impact i.e. 'damaged reputation' (Question 27 (b)), 'increased motivation' (Question 29) and 'more capital' (Question 31).

### Evaluative skill (Level 4)

Evaluation requires a reasoned decision that answers the question i.e. the greatest consequence of not operating sustainably (Question 27 (b)), reasoning on which reward system is best for the company to use (Question 29) and a recommendation on whether to change from a private limited company to a public limited company (Question 31).

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 Level 4 mark, an answer which argues using the particular circumstances of the business scenario, in this case a tomato farm were more highly rewarded.

Areas which challenged candidates on this paper were types of business ownership (Question 31) and sources of finance (Question 22). On the other hand, Question 21 SWOT analysis (threats), Question 27 (b) the impacts of not operating sustainably and Question 28 interpreting an organisation chart, were well answered.

## Section A overview

The vast majority of multiple choice questions were well answered. Those that were more challenging for candidates are discussed below.

### Question 16

16 A salad bar is **most likely** to reduce the size of its salads:

- A in response to a government initiative promoting healthy eating
- B in response to a reduction in the strength of competition
- C to increase its break-even level of output
- D to increase its reputation for offering value for money

[1]

This question was testing business responses to changes in their external environment. Only one-third of candidates selected the correct answer (B). Answer (C) was the most commonly selected incorrect answer. This is concerning since an increase in break-even is detrimental for a business because it makes it less likely to make a profit (or likely to make a lower profit).

### Question 17

17 Which would be classified as non-current assets in a statement of financial position?

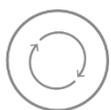
- A Inventory
- B Premises
- C Trade payables
- D Trade receivables

[1]

This question was testing knowledge of the terminology in a statement of financial position. Only a quarter of candidates gave the correct answer (B). Candidate responses were equally split across all four options. Inventory and trade receivables are current assets. Trade payables are liabilities.

### Assessment for learning



Centres are advised to make sure that candidates are aware of the various components of a statement of financial position (and income statement) and are able to identify examples for these components. Perhaps this could be done as a starter to a lesson while waiting for all students to arrive. Or at frequent intervals throughout the course show a list of component examples and ask students to identify in which category of the financial statement each should appear.

### Question 20

20 An extract from a CIC's cash flow statement for the final quarter of last year is shown below.

	October	November	December
<b>Net cash flow</b>	£7000	(£3000)	£0
<b>Opening balance</b>	(£5000)	£2000	(£1000)
<b>Closing balance</b>	£2000	(£1000)	(£1000)

According to the cash flow statement, which of the following statements **must** be true?

- A The CIC did not have any cash inflows in December
- B The CIC did not use its overdraft during the final quarter of last year
- C The CIC's cash inflows were greatest in October
- D The CIC's cash outflows exceeded cash inflows in November

[1]

This question was testing understanding of a cash flow statement. Very few candidates gave the correct answer (D). Several candidates who got the answer wrong chose response (B). (B) could not be correct because several of the opening/closing balances are in brackets i.e. negative. However, by far, the most common incorrect answers were (A) and (C), indicating confusion between net cash flow and cash inflows.

### Misconception



It is a common misconception that cash inflows automatically lead to high net cash flow (or vice versa). This is not the case because net cash flow is composed of two components i.e. cash inflows and cash outflows. So high cash inflows could be offset by high cash outflows, reducing net cash flow (or even making it negative).

## Section B overview

The questions in Section B should be answered with direct reference to candidates' personal research, as directed by the pre-released research brief available in advance of the examination. How each question in this section links to the research brief is tabulated in the Series Review section at the beginning of this report.

For each question in this section, candidates are advised to select the most appropriate business from the ones that they have researched, rather than answer all questions about the same business. Evidence suggests that choosing a specific business on which to answer each question leads to better focused answers and higher marks.

### Question 21

21 Using SWOT analysis, identify two **threats** to a business that you have researched.

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

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

1 .....

.....

2 .....

.....

[2]

Most candidates gained marks on this question. Of those candidates who did not, the most common errors were naming weaknesses rather than threats. SWOT analysis splits environmental factors into four quadrants – two of which are positive and two of which are negative. Of the two negative ones – weaknesses and threats – the difference lies in whether the factor is from an internal source (and therefore within the business' control) or from an external source (and therefore not within the business' control).

The most common correct answers were 'competition', 'inflation' and 'low levels of disposable income'.

#### Misconception



For SWOT analysis, all negative factors are not threats. Some negatives are weaknesses i.e. they are problems caused by the business itself rather than external forces that bombard it. Examples of weaknesses would include 'business location', 'slow decision making' and 'lack of employee commitment'. All of these are internal i.e. can be solved by changes within the business should the business owners choose to make these changes.

### Question 22

**22** Explain **one** advantage and **one** disadvantage to a business that you have researched of using a credit card as a source of finance.

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

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

**Advantage** .....

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

**Disadvantage** .....

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

**[4]**

Examiners were looking for specific advantages and disadvantages of using a credit card as a source of finance. In each case 2 marks were awarded for a valid contextual response and one mark awarded for a valid but non-contextual response.

The question did not ask what a credit card was or how to use one, so no marks were awarded for descriptive types of answers.

Exemplar 1

Name of business ..... Hot Dogs.

Activity of business ..... Local Dog groomers.

Advantage ..... One advantage of Hot Dogs using a credit card as a source of finance is that if hot dogs pay the money <sup>back</sup> within the agreed time which is usually a month then no interest will be charged so no money will be lost. This money borrowed would usually be spent on items like dog shampoo.

Disadvantage ..... one disadvantage of Hot Dogs using a credit card as a source of finance is that the interest rates will be high if the money borrowed is not paid back within the agreed time which could result in debt if Hot Dogs cannot afford the interest rates.

[4]

This response shows the importance of giving contextual answers.

Response 1 covers advantage bullet point 1 on the mark scheme (interest free period). It gains two marks because the answer is not only correct but also contextual (note the reference to 'dog shampoo').

Response 2 covers disadvantage bullet point 1 on the mark scheme (interest charge). It is a valid answer but this time there is no context, so is awarded only one of the available 2 marks.

Three marks out of an available 4 are credited. To gain full marks, response 2 would need to be contextual. One way that the candidate could have achieved this is by adding after 'if the money borrowed' something contextual such as 'for brushes' or 'for toiletries'

Assessment for learning



Centres are advised to encourage candidates to avoid generic wording like 'products', 'goods', 'units', 'items', 'services', 'output', etc. and instead refer to the specific product or service the business is providing. This is more likely to form part of a contextual answer, potentially gaining more marks.

### Question 23

23 Identify **one** objective of each of the following stakeholders:

- customers
- central government.

In each case, analyse an impact on a business you have researched of meeting this objective.

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

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

Objective of customers .....

.....

Impact on business of meeting this objective .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Objective of central government .....

.....

Impact on business of meeting this objective .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

[6]

For each stakeholder, candidates needed to name one objective of that stakeholder and then analyse the impact on a business of meeting this objective. The impacts could be negative or positive. For example, if the objective suggested for customers was 'low prices' then the impact on business could be 'lower revenue' or 'less profit' or 'better reputation' or 'positive publicity'. To gain full marks the impacts needed to be contextual.

Candidates tended to score more highly on the customer objective than the government objective, presumably because they are customers themselves. Of those who gained marks for the government objective, the most common correct answers concerned obeying the law and receiving tax revenue.

### Question 24

**24** Outline **two** ways a business you have researched complies with the Consumer Rights Act.

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

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

1 .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2 .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**[4]**

Candidates showed good knowledge of the Consumer Rights Act, both in relation to selling goods and providing services. The most common correct answers related to products being 'as described', 'of satisfactory quality' or 'giving a refund for a faulty product'. Those who gave contextual answers scored most highly.

It was evident, however, that there were some candidates that had absolutely no knowledge of the Consumer Rights Act – giving answers about data protection, copyright and discrimination legislation.



Exemplar 2

Name of business ... Apple  
Activity of business ... Technology store.  
Apple responded to raising levels of disposable income by creating newer iPhones and increased advertising on the product.  
Another way Apple have responded to rising levels of disposable income is by creating new services and subscriptions such as Apple Care. They also slightly increased prices of their older ~~sub~~ services like the iTunes subscriptions services like the iTunes app where you pay monthly for the music service. [4]

The candidate describes how Apple has produced new versions of its phones and increased its advertising of these newer models. The response is contextual – it refers to ‘phones’. Full marks awarded.

OCR support



Centres are advised to give candidates plenty of practice in preparing for Section B, since it is the one section of the exam where candidates can prepare well in advance.  
OCR’s Teach Cambridge resources site contains copies of all previous series’ research briefs, question papers and mark schemes. A research brief could be set for homework with questions being tackled as a test in class (simulating the experience of an exam). Or one or more questions from Section B could be tackled as part of a lesson starter or plenary.

## Section C overview

All of the questions in this section link to the business scenario which should be read carefully before answering any of the questions in this section of the exam paper.

### Question 26 (a)

All of the questions in Section C should be answered in relation to the business scenario on page 12.

**26** Use the information in **Fig. 1**.

**(a)** Identify Wilson Ltd's:

- position in the market

.....

- largest competitor.

.....

**[2]**

Most candidates were able to extract the required details from the business scenario and produced an accurate answer, scoring full marks.

### Question 26 (b)

**(b)** Assuming British growers produced a total of 143 000 tonnes of tomatoes last year, calculate Wilson Ltd's volume of sales in 2024.

.....

.....

.....

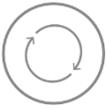
.....

.....

..... **[2]**

The correct answer is '31460 tonnes'. Most candidates had a good try at answering this question. Approximately two-thirds correctly calculated '31,460' gaining one mark. Far fewer included the units (i.e. tonnes) in their answer.

**Assessment for learning**



Centres are advised to reinforce to students the importance of stating their units when answering calculation questions. Correctly identifying the units could gain them an additional mark.

**Question 27 (a)**

**27**

**(a)** In the context of the environment, what does 'sustainability' mean?

.....

.....

.....

..... [1]

Sustainability is about being environmentally friendly so as to preserve resources for future generations. While most candidates mentioned something about being environmentally friendly, many did not refer to the future/long-term element. Those whose answers related specifically to sustainability (rather than just be environmentally friendly) were awarded the mark.

## Question 27 (b)

(b) Evaluate likely consequences for Wilson Ltd if it does **not** operate sustainably.

[12]

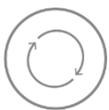
As with all 12-mark questions on this paper, the question is Level of Response marked. The type of answer examiners were looking for is shown in the exemplar response in the published mark scheme. This question requires candidates to consider the consequences on Wilson Ltd if it did not operate sustainably.

By far the most common consequences suggested were damage to reputation, loss of customer trust, boycotts and workers leaving. Any of these, and more, could form part of a chain of argument taking a response to Level 3. For example, 'reputation is damaged (Level 1), causing restaurants to buy from elsewhere (Level 2) leading to reduced revenue for Wilson Ltd (Level 3)'.

Once Level 3 had been achieved, candidates needed to select the greatest consequence and justify that selection in order to achieve Level 4. Those candidates who did so were awarded at least 10 marks. Those that included context within the justification achieved a minimum of 11 marks. To achieve full marks candidates needed to compare at least two consequences and argue why one was more suitable for Wilson Ltd than the other.

The majority of candidates ended their responses abruptly with no attempt at selecting the greatest consequence or, if they did, made no attempt at justifying their selection. Without L4 evaluation, the maximum mark that can be awarded is 9 out of 12. Of those that did attempt an evaluative conclusion, many concluded that Wilson Ltd should continue to operate sustainably. This may be true but was not the question. It is good practice to re-read the question before attempting to write the conclusion. This hopefully avoids making an incorrect type of judgement.

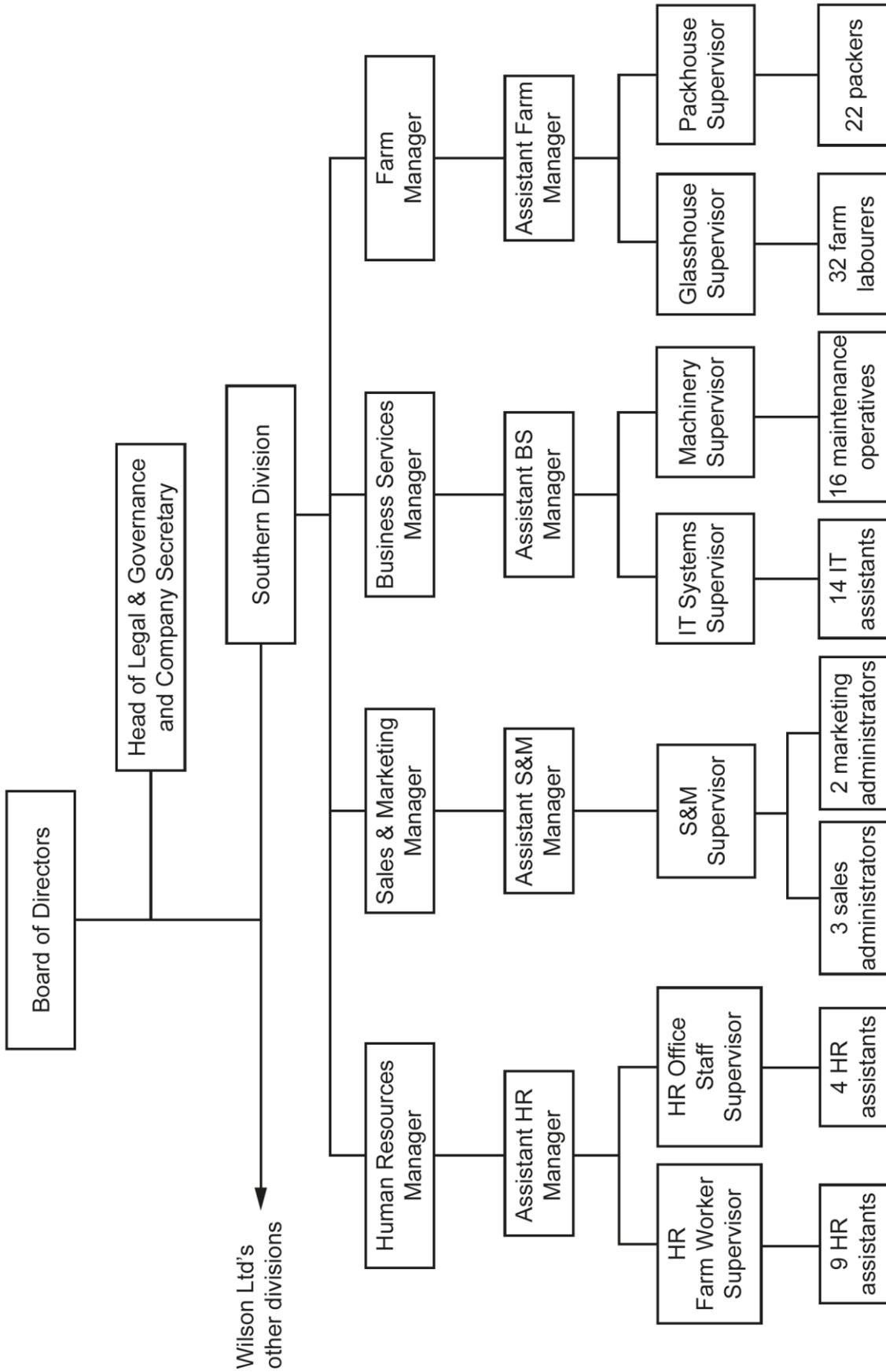
### Assessment for learning



Centres are advised to encourage candidates to always write an evaluative conclusion justifying their response to all 12-mark questions.

Question 28

28 Each of Wilson Ltd's three divisions is organised in the same way. The organisation chart for Wilson Ltd's Southern Division is shown below.



A copy of the organisation chart from page 16 is included in the Insert.

Identify:

- the formal communication path from Southern Division's Assistant Farm Manager to the 22 packers

.....

.....

- the span of control of Southern Division's S&M Supervisor

.....

.....

- **one** job role in the Southern Division that has the same status as its Human Resources Manager

.....

.....

- the hierarchical structure Wilson Ltd uses

.....

.....

- the way Wilson Ltd is organised.

.....

.....

[5]

Bullet points 1, 3 and 4 were answered correctly by the vast majority of candidates. Bullet point 5 tested candidate knowledge of organisation by geographic location, and as such was less well answered. However, it was bullet point 2 that threw up the greatest confusion. Span of control refers to a number, the number of direct reports (immediate subordinates). The S&M Supervisor manages five people. The answer to bullet point 2, therefore, was '5'. A list of staff or 2 + 3, is not a correct answer and could not be rewarded.

## Question 29

**29** The directors know that the success of Eastern Division will depend to a large extent on the quality of its human resources (HR) function.

Analyse **three** employee reward systems that could be used at Eastern Division.

Which one of the three systems should Eastern Division use? Justify your answer.

**[12]**

As with all 12-mark questions on this paper, this question was Level of Response marked. The question required candidates to consider rewards that could be given to workers in return for increased endeavour.

Candidates appeared to respond positively to this question, often suggesting 'employee of the month scheme', 'bonuses', 'additional time off', 'discounts', 'vouchers' and various other fringe benefits. Any of these could be developed through to Level 3 by a chain of argument. For example, 'The company could give bonuses (Level 1) which would motivate employees to work harder (Level 2), increasing productivity (Level 3)'.

In an attempt to encourage all candidates to make a justified judgement for Level 4, the question demanded this explicitly. The majority of candidates, therefore, wrote a final paragraph which selected a specific reward. Those that gave a valid reason for their choice were awarded Level 4. Those candidates who gave a contextual justification achieved a minimum of 11 marks. To achieve full marks candidates needed to compare at least two rewards and argue why one was better for Wilson Ltd than the other.

## Exemplar 3

leaderboard → employee of the month  
voucher/bonus day off (paid).

- 29 The directors know that the success of Eastern Division will depend to a large extent on the quality of its human resources (HR) function.

Analyse **three** employee reward systems that could be used at Eastern Division.

Which one of the three systems should Eastern Division use? Justify your answer. [12]

Firstly, a cheap reward system that could be used at Eastern Division is a leader board. It will show the rankings of each employee and the employee in first place will be the employee of the month. It can be time consuming to create, but it won't cost anything to create. This will allow for money to be spent on other areas of the business. This can get employees motivated to work hard which can benefit Eastern Division of their workforce. However, employees may not really care as it is only a title and there isn't any physically awards ~~involved~~ <sup>involved</sup>. The motivation may decrease after a while as employees get bored.

Eastern Division could give the most hard working employee of the month a full paid day off. This will give the employees more motivation as there is actually a reward involved. It will create a hard working workforce which will benefit the business. However, it will cost them a bit more to pay for an employees full

day off, and because it is only given to one employee, it can demotivate staff and make them feel useless.

Eastern division could also give out vouchers to their hard working employees. If the vouchers only have some money on it they could give it to a few employees. This will get them more motivated as there is a higher chance of them receiving a reward. However, this can cost them

29	more money to buy the vouchers each month.
	Overall, I believe that the vouchers will be the best reward system as there is a prize involved. It can be costly but it will keep the employees motivated and working hard.

The candidate begins by identifying a reward i.e. being recognised as employee of the month (Level 1). There is then explanation of a consequence on the business i.e. time consuming to create but won't cost anything (Level 2). Then analysis on the impact on the business i.e. will allow for money to be spent on other areas (Level 3). At this point, the candidate has gained 7 of the available 12 marks.

The second paragraph identifies another reward i.e. a full paid day off (Level 1). The effect on the employee is explained i.e. more motivation (Level 2). Then analysis on the impact on the business i.e. more costs (Level 3). This takes the response to a mid-Level 3 mark of 8.

The third paragraph identifies another reward i.e. vouchers (Level 1). Again the explanation is increased motivation (Level 2) with analytical argument about increased cost (Level 3). This takes the response to a top-Level 3 mark of 9.



## Question 31

- 31** Advise the directors on whether they should change the legal ownership of Wilson Ltd to a public limited company. Justify your answer. **[12]**

As with all 12-mark questions on this paper, this question was Level of Response marked. The question required candidates to consider the advantages and disadvantages for a private limited company in general, and Wilson Ltd in particular, of becoming a public limited company.

Candidates did not do well on this question. Many candidates suggested that a public limited company would lose the protection of limited liability. Even more concerning was that a multitude of candidates suggested that a public limited company would be government funded. Of those candidates who appeared to know what a public limited company was, many erroneously talked about new ideas and skills of shareholders. Shareholders of a public limited company are external, so despite being owners would not control the company or have any active role in running it.

Few candidates made valid points of comparison, even fewer took their arguments through to demonstrate analytical skill. Of those that did, evaluations tended to be void of any valid argument, so few achieved Level 4. Please see the published mark scheme for the type of answer examiners were looking for.

### Misconception



A public limited company operates in the private sector. It is owned by shareholders who buy shares on the stock exchange. A public limited company does not operate in the public sector. A public limited company is not government owned nor is it government funded.

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### Which courses are available?

There are **two types** of online course: an **introductory module** and **subject-specific** courses.

The introductory module, Building your Confidence in Internal Assessment, is designed for all teachers who are involved in internal assessment for our qualifications. It covers the following topics:

- the purpose and benefits of internal assessment
- the roles and responsibilities of teachers, assessors, internal verifiers and moderators
- the principles and methods of standardisation
- the best practices for collecting, storing and submitting evidence
- the common issues and challenges in internal assessment and how to avoid them.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

- the structure and content of the NEA units
- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units
- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units
- interactive marking practice and feedback for the NEA units.

We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

### How can you get support and feedback?

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email [support@ocr.org.uk](mailto:support@ocr.org.uk).

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how to improve the online courses and make them more useful and relevant for you. You can share your views by completing the evaluation form at the end of each course.

## Need to get in touch?

If you ever have any questions about OCR qualifications or services (including administration, logistics and teaching) please feel free to get in touch with our customer support centre.

Call us on  
**01223 553998**

Alternatively, you can email us on  
**support@ocr.org.uk**

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