A-LEVEL
BUSINESS STUDIES

BUSS3: Strategies for Success
Report on the Examination

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General Overview

This paper proved to be accessible with the majority of students being able to attempt all of the questions. Timing was not an issue, only a small minority of students appearing to leave insufficient time to answer the final question fully.

As with previous series, the strongest students revealed good subject knowledge and were able to understand the most important issues facing the business. In terms of application, the best students were able use the data provided to make relevant calculations, which were then effectively linked to the business scenario in order to support relevant arguments. Students who were able to make selective, well developed arguments which were consistently focused on the question, scored highly for analysis. Students that achieved the top level for evaluation were those who wrote conclusions that directly answered the question set, and were supported by well-developed analysis.

Weaker students tended to lack subject knowledge which was particularly evident in question 1. These answers tended to be superficial and simply describe the material provided, with no attempt to make relevant calculations. Conclusions to answers tended to be a simple summary of previous arguments.

Question 1

This question generated a wide range of answers. Well prepared students generally gained full marks, although a common mistake when attempting to calculate the ARR was the failure to subtract the £10m cost from the total return.

Many students were unable to calculate the exact period between 3 and 4 years for the payback calculation.

It was disappointing to see that a significant number of students failed to show their calculations. This meant that the 'own figure rule' could not be used resulting in zero marks for incorrect answers.

Some students wasted time by writing lengthy analysis of their calculations, when the question had simply stated that they were required to just calculate the payback and ARR.

Question 2

Although most students showed understanding of both delayering and empowerment, they often failed to relate these to the actual business. Consequently this resulted in largely theoretical answers which failed to gain application marks.

Stronger students were able to show good analysis of both the advantages and disadvantages of these concepts, combined with consistent reference to issues in the case study, eg linking the cost of making 10 experienced managers redundant to the poor financial state of the business.

Students would often write lengthy paragraphs which attempted to explain the motivational benefits resulting from greater empowerment. These tended to be largely theoretical, and failed to explain in sufficient detail exactly *how* these benefits would be gained, eg 'greater empowerment would lead to improved motivation which would result in improved productivity and higher profits'. Consequently these answers did not score highly for analysis.

Question 3

The best answers used the data well to make relevant calculations such as break even and forecasted profits for both locations. Students also scored highly for application by linking relevant information, eg the closeness of the NE factory to the nearest port with the proposal to target the European market.

Weaker students tended to make too many arguments with little development and simply described the data rather than interpreting its significance.

For evaluation, the stronger students were able to make evaluative comments throughout their answers, as well as writing a definitive conclusion supported by strong prior analysis.

Question 4

As with previous series, the key to success in answering this question is based upon writing a well-structured response. It is pleasing to report that there were several examples of students who were able to make selective, well supported arguments both for and against the proposal that were consistently in context. Often these arguments would include financial analysis, for example ROCE and gearing calculations that were then used to analyse the difficulties the business could encounter in raising finance for the proposal. Conclusions and recommendations based upon this analysis and provided a justified answer whether or not to accept the proposal, gained the top level for evaluation.

Weaker answers tended to lack structure, made too many poorly developed arguments and simply described the case study material. Often arguments were assertive, based upon opinion rather than the evidence provided. In many cases students made relevant calculations but failed to use them to support an argument. Conclusions tended to lack depth and were often a simple summary of previous arguments. In many cases students would include additional arguments in their conclusions, indicating a lack of prior planning to their answers.

In preparing students for this unit, centres should stress the importance to their students of planning their answers, being selective in the number of arguments made and ensuring that each argument is well supported by relevant calculations and/or case study material.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion