



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**BUSINESS
AS**

SUMMER 2023

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COMPONENT 1: BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

General Comments

As the first paper after the pandemic to not include advance information, it was pleasing to see candidates attempt all the questions. There were no indications of timing issues and the majority of questions seemed very accessible. There were some challenges with the requirements of knowledge where this paper assessed portions of the specification that may have been overlooked.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1**
- (a)** Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of public sector aims. However, in some instances candidate responses lacked distinction between the public and private sector. For example, a common response was to 'benefit the economy'. This response presents itself as a consequence of public sector activity as opposed to an aim so was not credited.
 - (b)**
 - (i)** Many candidates failed to recognise the four main types of not-for-profit organisations and instead presented examples. For instance, a common response was to state a charity and a food bank which would only be credited with one mark.
 - (ii)** Many candidates were able to identify some features of their chosen not-for-profit organisation. However, some of these were repetitive or instead more explicitly described the overall aims of a not-for-profit as opposed to the features.
 - (c)** Most candidates were able to adequately explain the impact of the restaurant closure to the wider economy. The context provided was good and supported the points made with suitable follow on analysis. However, many responses lacked evaluation and balance. The higher-level responses included the impact on Jamie Oliver where lower ability candidates tended to leave this out, or if attempted, it was too generic to be awarded marks. This prevented some from achieving Band 2 for AO3 and AO4.
- Q.2**
- (a)** This question was well attempted by candidates with some good responses. Few lacked a clear definition, but overall the responses were reasonable.
 - (b)** Most candidates gave a good attempt to this question. Many misidentified the structure as an oligopoly. However, some missed the key term in the question 'market structure' and misidentified this as a niche market. Correctly identified features in the follow-on response were still awarded. Candidates should be mindful to not only quote the context; further explanation is required.
 - (c)** The majority of candidates were able to complete the calculations without issue. Some candidates used a formula whilst others used other skills but were able to arrive at the correct response. A few candidates failed to include a pound sign and lost a mark.

The second calculation proved slightly more difficult, but the majority of candidates were able to complete the calculation without issue. OFR applied and a mark was lost if candidates failed to include a percentage sign.

- (d) The majority of candidate responses were well executed. Most responses included a good analysis with clear lines of argument. However, many candidates were limited in their evaluation with no conditionals offered and some failed to provide an overall judgment to the suitability of the options. This prevented candidates from achieving top band marks for AO4. Higher ability candidates were able to weigh the two options against each other and included key “depends on factors” to arrive at an overall judgment.

Q.3 (a) The majority of candidates provided a suitable response to a key component of a business plan. A few candidates were too vague or generic in their response but most correctly identified an accepted component.

- (b) The majority of candidates were able to explain the purpose of a business plan. When marks were lost, it was due to repetition of points or not providing a follow through explanation for AO3.

- (c) (i) The majority of scripts were able to execute most of the requirements for break even. Lines were drawn accurately with most labelled correctly. There were a minority of candidates who mistook the starting point for total costs, however marks were still given for the accurate drawing of fixed costs and total revenue.

- (ii) The majority of candidates were awarded this mark. OFR applied for reading graphs that were incorrect. Some candidates who did not complete or accurately draw the break-even chart instead used the formula and were able to accurately answer this question. Marks were not awarded for numbers stated that did not match the graph.

- (d) Candidates approached this question very well. Most were able to decipher from the data given reasons for and against each option. These points tended to be well analysed with good chains of reasoning. Higher ability candidates were able to weigh up the options against each other as opposed to lower ability candidates who gave more generic advantages and disadvantages for each option.

A good proportion of candidates were able to use the context given with consistent reference made throughout the response, but some only stated data with no further analysis provided. For top marks, candidates were expected to include both quantitative and qualitative data including further calculations which only a few candidates did.

A minority of candidates achieved top marks for AO4 which required a well-balanced evaluation considering qualitative and quantitative data and overall judgment. This was attempted by most candidates but those with lower ability lacked reasoned judgements and balance.

A small number of candidates misread the question as a comparison between qualitative and quantitative data.

Summary of key points

Basic knowledge was good with some questions proving to be more challenging than others. Care should be taken to ensure questions are fully read as some missed secondary requirements and missed out on marks.

Candidates were mostly able to use the context provided to support their responses. However, candidates should be mindful of the command words to ensure they include evaluation and judgement when required. Stronger candidates were able to identify these command words and showcase their skills in the band 3 questions.

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COMPONENT 2: BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

General Comments

Candidates were able to mostly demonstrate good knowledge of Component 2. The standard of quantitative skills was good. Timing is difficult to judge considering a proportion of candidates did not attempt all questions. The essay questions were attempted by most, with mixed results. For some, it was very pleasing to see well structured responses. Only a few failed to follow the rules for section B and answered different question sets.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- Q.1**
- (a)** The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate a limited understanding of benchmarking however most lacked enough detail for the second mark to be awarded.
 - (b)** Candidates were able to access this question without issue with most carrying out the correct operation for the 2 marks.
 - (c)** Most candidates attempted this question but some failed to recognise the requirement for two types of new technology and instead explained just one type. Lower ability candidates would often repeat their points or fail to apply their reasoning to new technology as opposed to technology in general.
 - (d)** Higher ability candidates would recognise that to consider is to evaluate. These responses had good 'depends on' factors for both employees and employers. However lower ability candidates would list or only briefly explain the advantage to one or the other. A few candidates referred to 'saving time' which actually applies to a hot desk booking system and not hot desking itself which limited some marks given.
 - (e)** This question was well answered by the majority of candidates. Most were able to give good explanations of the difference between a job description and person specification and also included relevant examples from the context. Any marks dropped would tend to stem from either being too vague in defining the key terms or failing to provide examples.
 - (f)** A large proportion of candidates did not attempt this question and of those who did many were unsure of the theorists required for the question. General motivation responses were not awarded marks. Some candidates confused Herzberg's two factor theory with Mayo. A few higher ability candidates answered this question well, but the vast majority were vague in nature and unsure.

- Q.2**
- (a)** Most candidates attempted this question. Some were able to properly define the term benchmarking however a good majority focused too much on just 'improving quality' and not that this stemmed from a comparison to competitors or against a set target to overcome. Marks were limited to primarily 1 for this question with higher ability candidates achieving 2.
 - (b)** **(i) & (ii)** Calculation questions that were answered well by the majority of candidates. Formula marks were available, however most scripts achieved both marks for both questions.
 - (iii)** Most candidates that attempted this question provided good context for AO2. However, some did not extend to providing an analysis of the high level of capacity or giving a judgment. Instead, the data was stated, with no assessment of the impact. This limited marks to Band 1.
 - (c)** Candidates approached this question very well with some responses including good analysis and evaluation. Higher ability candidates were able to weigh up the difference between focusing on quality or price and included well-reasoned evaluative factors. Some candidates did offer good analysis but would fail to provide judgments to show AO4. This limited some candidates to Bands 1 and 2.
- Q.3**
- (a)**
 - (i)** Attempted by the majority of candidates, this question was mostly answered well. A few candidates confused the labelling which limited marks.
 - (ii)** Some candidates were able to offer a judgment to the financial performance. When done well, this included balance. However, a number of scripts would state the data and not include any further evaluation.
 - (b)** Almost all candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of the product life cycle with the majority of those correctly referencing the relationship between the PLC and cash flow. Higher ability candidates would recognise when cash flow is negative and positive with a good explanation of why, referencing inflows and outflows. However, some candidates were too generic in their responses which limited their marks to Band 1.
 - (c)** A well attempted question. The majority of candidates provided suitable context and analysis of the marketing efforts. Candidates showed a clear line of argument but many of these responses lacked balance. For some, judgments remained superficial with little development. Higher ability candidates recognised the need to provide a valid judgment with balance for marks in Band 2.

Section B

- Q.4**
- (a)** Attempted by some, most of these candidates were able to recognise the different organisational structures with appropriate application to a creative business. At times the application was good. The knowledge shown for AO1 by some candidates was good but others were brief in the identification of the features and remained vague. This limited marks to Band 1 or 2.

- (b) Of those who attempted this question, very few were able to recognise that workforce performance was referencing absenteeism, turnover and productivity. The responses were vague and generalised. Some marks were awarded if reference was made to the previous point but most candidates who attempted this question answered it as a motivational question. This was further shown in the written response for operations management which candidates mistook for management styles. This limited the majority of marks to Band 1.

- Q.5 (a)** A well attempted question with most candidates able to clearly identify the difference between revenue, cash flow, and profit. Higher ability candidates were able to ensure the differences were clear and each was well defined. Lower ability candidates only clearly defined one or two of the key terms.

The application for AO2 was mixed. Higher ability candidates were able to clearly relate each of the terms to a seasonal business whilst those with lower ability were generic and repetitive.

- (b) A well attempted question, most candidates were able to identify suitable strategies to solve cash flow problems and relate these to stakeholders. For most, the chains of reasoning for AO3 was clear and often well explained. A weakness of skill was shown in AO4 where many candidates failed to provide a balanced evaluation as to how their point impacted stakeholders. Often, candidates would stay on a positive or negative thread with no real judgements being made. A few candidates would focus on how the strategy to improve cash flow impacted the business and fail to fully analyse any stakeholder. This limited marks for some. However, the majority were able to access Band 2 for this question.

- Q.6 (a)** The majority of candidates were able to provide a good understanding of the marketing mix. This knowledge was generally good. For some, however, marks were limited due to not consistently applying this to a business that is regarded as a monopoly. Weaker responses would include limited and generic suggestions of the marketing mix in relation to a monopoly, often with points being repetitive. Higher ability candidates made direct and clear reference to a monopoly throughout the response.

- (b) Overall a good question. Most candidates were able to evaluate the importance of market research with links to survival. Higher ability candidates would also consider other factors that may impact survival for Band 3. Stronger responses would include well-reasoned conclusions that considered key depends on factors as well as balance.

More limited responses would remain superficial with no demonstration of the difference between the types of research or how their use might impact a business. These candidates would sometimes provide a one-sided argument with little development or reference to how research helped/hindered survival. These scripts were limited to Band 1 or sometimes 2.

Summary of key points

Some questions proved more difficult in this paper, in particular with the motivation question. Timing issues are difficult to gauge given the number of candidates who didn't attempt one or more questions.

Overall, most candidates showed good knowledge with most of the topics assessed. In general, context was good and analysis was developed well. Evaluation seemed to cause some problems with responses not being balanced and lacking judgments.

Stronger candidates were able to demonstrate higher levels of skill, in particular with the essay question part B. Structure was applied well and conclusions were well attempted.

The essay question was difficult for some. For a few candidates, consideration of their chosen question should be thought out more carefully to ensure an understanding of how to formulate their response.



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