

# GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Business  
A Level  
Summer 2025

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## Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.<sup>1</sup>

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that 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.

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## Executive Summary

All three examination papers were of a similar standard to previous examination series and provided high accessibility for candidates.

Overall, candidates demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of many of the topic areas from across the full A level content, although there were also quite a few notable gaps in knowledge and some incorrect understanding of content.

It was pleasing to see across all three papers that handwriting appeared to be slightly better than previous series, with a lot fewer scripts being escalated with illegibility issues. It was also really helpful to examiners when candidates used paragraphs effectively to structure the longer responses, hopefully this will continue to improve going forward. It was also notable that for mid and high tariff questions candidates were writing in a more succinct manner, and a higher proportion of responses were finished in the allocated space, this may have helped candidates manage the time better in the examination with less incomplete or unanswered questions.

Component 1 and 2 have a high weighting of quantitative skill assessment and there was a continued improvement this year in terms of presentation and accuracy, though many candidates still make unnecessary errors in their calculations and often do not include clear formula and workings out, just in case they present the wrong final answer. Centres are encouraged to advance and develop this aspect when carrying out calculations.

Candidates should also take care in identifying the demands and specific requirements of the question and the command words in order to recognise the skills being assessed in the question and fully. There was quite a few responses where candidates are not responding to the question set.

Application of context remains a key area for improvement in all three papers. The data is given for a reason, and candidates must use this in order to access the higher bands, far too many responses are still generic and ignore the data or context given.

Responses to questions that require AO3 are improving, though there are still too many candidates that are not developing fully the points they make. Analytical responses should include logical and extended chains of reasoning. Candidates should not simply identify outcomes but clearly explain how and why they occur in a business context.

Evaluation is also a skill that still needs to be improved. Evaluation should be developed, balanced, and supported with qualifying statements or dependent factors. Superficial final sentences or unsupported conclusions do not meet the standard for AO4 Band 3. It was pleasantly notable that more candidates are now giving responses where evaluation takes place throughout the answer rather than solely in the final paragraph.

## **BUSINESS**

### **GCE A level**

#### **Summer 2025**

### **COMPONENT 1: BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AND FUNCTIONS**

#### **Overview of the Component**

The examination paper was broadly accessible across the ability range, with attempt rates ranging from 96.3% to 99.7%. The mean mark for the paper was 50.4 out of 80 (63.0%), indicating that, while candidates were generally able to access the paper, performance was slightly weaker than in previous years (55.0 in 2024; 53.9 in 2023). This suggests a marginally more demanding paper.

Performance on short knowledge-based and numerical questions was generally strong. Questions such as Q.2(a) (FF: 85.1%), Q.3 (FF: 84.9%) and Q.5(a)(i) (FF: 89.9%) were among the most accessible on the paper, demonstrating clear strengths in recall and core business calculations. Most candidates showed appropriate use of formulae and working and there was evidence of procedural fluency in quantitative skills across the cohort.

In contrast, extended responses requiring higher-order skills, particularly evaluation, continued to present a challenge. In many of the 8-mark questions and 10-mark questions, including Q.4 (FF: 64.8%), Q.5(c) (FF: 61.7%) and Q.7 (FF: 65.2%), candidates often provided one-sided or superficial evaluations, typically limited to brief final statements without deeper reflection or qualifying analysis. While analytical points were often relevant, they lacked the extended chains of reasoning required for higher marks.

Application of context remains a key area for improvement. Despite rich stimulus material in both Section A and Section B, many candidates failed to integrate this effectively into their responses. Generic or theoretical answers limited access to higher mark bands, particularly in AO2 and AO3 questions. For example, in Q.5(c), Q.6(b), and Q.8(c), limited engagement with the case meant responses lacked the specificity required at A level.

Understanding of certain specification areas was noticeably weak. For instance, only a small proportion of candidates correctly defined the term "quality chain" in Q.8(a), which had the lowest facility factor of the paper (FF: 13.6%). Similarly, Q.6(a), which assessed gross profit calculation, had a facility factor of just 24.8%, reflecting gaps in candidates' understanding of cost of sales and the treatment of stock.

Nonetheless, the paper functioned well in differentiating candidate performance. Stronger responses were characterised by accurate use of terminology, consistent development of argument, and integration of context. Candidates also showed a good awareness of the command terms used in each question and structured their responses accordingly.

## **Comments on individual questions/sections**

### **Q.1 (a)**

This question was generally well answered, with most candidates demonstrating a good definition of the term market research. The majority of responses included clear references to the collection of data or information about customers or competitors, often supported by the correct identification of primary or secondary research methods. A small proportion of candidates provided more limited definitions, using vague or generic terms such as “market” or “research” without specifying the purpose or focus. These responses often described the concept rather than defined it precisely, which restricted access to full marks.

### **Q.1 (b)**

This question was answered well overall with most candidates demonstrating a good understanding of the purpose and features of a business plan. Responses typically followed a logical structure, with many outlining the potential benefits of producing a business plan, considering its limitations, and attempting a judgement about its overall importance to success.

Evaluation was attempted by the majority of candidates, although the depth and balance varied considerably. Some provided a clear comparison between the value of a business plan and other factors such as external influences, competition, or the entrepreneur’s personal skills and experience. Stronger responses recognised that a detailed and realistic business plan could support success, but would not guarantee it, and that the planning process itself might be more useful than the final document. Weaker responses tended to repeat earlier points or offered superficial conclusions.

Application was a common area for improvement. While the stimulus included multiple contextual cues, such as the competitive environment, Jamie’s prior experience and qualifications, and his use of social media to promote the business, these were often under used. Better responses embedded these contextual details to enhance analysis and support evaluation.

### **Q.2 (a)**

This calculation question was generally well answered. The vast majority of candidates demonstrated good procedural understanding, with most clearly applying the correct formula for profit and providing accurate workings that led to the correct final answer. The most common approach was to use the total revenue minus total costs method, which was credited fully. Fewer candidates attempted the contribution method, but when used correctly, this was equally effective. Common errors included occasional mistakes when calculating variable costs or failing to multiply monthly figures by 12, leading to incorrect annual values. A small number of candidates omitted the £ symbol or made rounding errors. Candidates were generally well prepared to apply quantitative skills in context, and this question reflected strong understanding of core profit calculations.

### **Q.2 (b)**

This question was mostly answered well, with many candidates correctly calculating the average profit for both years and identifying the change. However, some candidates failed to average the figures, instead comparing total profit (£8,280 and £7,350) directly. A number of responses did not explicitly state the difference of £0.75 or 6.12%. Errors in percentage change calculations were common, often due to reversing values or incorrect application of the formula. With a facility factor of 53.3%, this question proved more demanding than Q.2(a), largely due to simple but avoidable mistakes.

### **Q.3**

This question was generally answered well, with most candidates able to identify and develop two valid reasons why consumer protection is important. Common responses referred to high prices for essential goods and services (e.g. energy or medicines), ensuring product quality, and the need for clear and accurate labelling.

The strongest answers provided well-developed explanations, often supported by real-world or hypothetical examples. While examples were not required, they helped to contextualise responses and demonstrate understanding. However, some candidates gave vague justifications, such as stating that “customers need to be protected,” which added little beyond the question wording. Others gave two closely related points or confused consumer protection with general customer service.

### **Q.4**

Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the roles of both the public and private sectors in the provision of goods and services. AO1 knowledge marks were frequently awarded, with candidates often identifying relevant features, definitions and examples of each sector. Stronger responses referred to the provision of merit goods and public services (e.g. healthcare and education) by the public sector, and the focus on consumer goods, competition and innovation by the private sector. A minority of candidates confused the terms public sector and public limited company, or private sector and private limited company, leading to misdirected responses.

Analysis was generally good, with most candidates considering the role of both sectors. However, responses often lacked depth. While many were able to construct simple chains of reasoning, more detailed and developed arguments were needed to reach the higher levels. Evaluation was typically attempted but often lacked balance or sophistication. Judgements were frequently generic or repetitive, with many concluding that both sectors are important without offering a well-reasoned argument. More effective responses recognised that the importance of each sector depends on the type of good or service and included qualifying statements, for example, “the private sector may offer greater innovation, but not all services can be provided profitably.” Some stronger responses also acknowledged different societal needs or the state’s role in correcting market failure. Candidates should focus on developing balanced and well-supported evaluations, consider different stakeholder perspectives, and demonstrate a clearer sense of weighting between the contributions of each sector.

**In Q.5 (a) (i)** the vast majority of candidates correctly identified the stage of the product life cycle shown in the diagram as the growth stage. Responses showed secure knowledge, and errors were rare. A small number of candidates selected incorrect stages such as “maturity” or “incline,” but these were isolated.

**Q.5 (a) (ii)** also produced a good level of performance, although slightly more candidates gave incorrect answers than in Q.5(a)(i). Most identified time as the correct answer, but a minority gave incorrect responses such as “breakeven,” “sales,” or “expansion,” reflecting either confusion with other business models or a lack of confidence of the diagram. Centres are encouraged to reinforce the terminology of all aspects of the model to prevent loss of marks due to vague or incorrect labels.

### **Q.5 (b)**

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates recognised that cash flow is likely to be negative during the introduction stage of the product life cycle and were able to explain this by referencing high costs, particularly for marketing, alongside limited sales revenue. Many used appropriate terminology such as “cash inflow” and “cash outflow”.

Some candidates extended their answers by linking the introduction stage to the earlier development phase, suggesting that cumulative costs from research and development were still being recovered. This approach was creditworthy and showed a broader understanding of how financial impacts can span multiple stages of the product life cycle. Not all responses addressed both elements of cash flow. A minority focused only on low inflows or high outflows without considering both, limiting their explanation.

#### **Q.5 (c)**

This question produced mixed responses. Most candidates demonstrated some knowledge of promotional strategies, but many focused narrowly on advertising. While advertising was a valid approach, stronger responses recognised the need to consider a range of strategies, including social media, sponsorship, product placement, and public relations.

Application was an area of inconsistency. The stimulus material provided rich contextual detail, including references to Hot Wheels and Barbie, a global presence in 150 countries, and an appeal to different generations. Some candidates used these details effectively to support their points, particularly by referring to marketing towards children, parents, or older consumers. However, many responses lacked meaningful application or ignored the case study entirely.

Analysis was generally sound, with candidates often identifying benefits such as increased awareness or marketing economies of scale, and drawbacks such as cost. However, lines of reasoning were frequently underdeveloped, and few candidates explored how multiple promotional methods might complement one another.

Evaluation was typically attempted, but it was often generic or unbalanced. Stronger responses considered dependent factors such as the size of the marketing budget, levels of competition (e.g. LEGO or Hasbro), or the need to appeal to diverse audiences. However, many conclusions were simplistic or repetitive.

Candidates should be encouraged to fully engage with the wording of the question, (particularly the requirement to assess *a range* of strategies) and to develop deeper evaluative judgements using the context provided.

#### **Q.6 (a)**

This question proved to be one of the most challenging on the paper, with a facility factor of just 24.8%. While a small number of candidates accurately calculated gross profit, the majority applied incorrect methods or omitted essential components of the calculation.

A common error was the failure to apply the correct formula for cost of sales:  
 $\text{Cost of Sales} = \text{Opening Stock} + \text{Purchases} - \text{Closing Stock}$ . Instead, many candidates simply deducted purchases from revenue, or incorrectly attempted to use variable costs, direct costs, or other unrelated figures. A significant proportion either ignored opening and closing stock or misused them, leading to incorrect answers. Some responses showed no working or omitted the formula altogether, which made it difficult to award method marks. Despite being a relatively straightforward question in principle, candidate performance suggested limited familiarity with the structure of the income statement and the distinction between purchases and cost of sales. Centres are advised to reinforce the correct methodology and terminology, ensuring candidates understand each component of the calculation and can apply it accurately.

This question highlighted a clear area for development in financial understanding and quantitative skills and should be a focus for future teaching and revision.

### **Q.6 (b)**

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to identify and explain appropriate sources of finance for expansion, including retained profit, share capital, venture capital, and hire purchase. The majority avoided inappropriate sources such as owner's capital or trade credit, though these were still suggested by a minority of candidates. Knowledge of each source's features was generally secure. Better responses showed clear understanding of the context by linking their suggestions to relevant case study details. However, many responses remained theoretical and did not fully engage with the information provided, limiting AO2 marks.

Analysis was usually strong, with candidates often discussing cost implications, control, flexibility, or risk. Evaluation was less consistent. Many responses evaluated each source in isolation or attempted a final recommendation, which was a valid approach, though often lacking depth or balance.

Overall, this question highlighted good knowledge and analytical skills. Centres are advised to continue reinforcing the importance of contextual application and to support candidates in developing more detailed, well-reasoned evaluations that incorporate qualifying statements.

### **Q.7**

This question was reasonably well understood and produced a solid level of performance. Most candidates were able to demonstrate understanding of flexible working patterns, frequently identifying examples such as remote working or zero-hours contracts. Descriptions of features and characteristics were generally sound, though inconsistent use of key terminology limited access to the highest marks in some cases.

Candidates generally considered the effects of flexible working on both employers and employees. Many highlighted benefits such as improved work-life balance, reduced absenteeism, or lower business overheads, while drawbacks included communication challenges and difficulties monitoring performance. Analysis was typically good rather than excellent, often consisting of single-stage or generic reasoning, and tended to focus more on the employee perspective.

Evaluation was attempted by most candidates, but few responses demonstrated the balance and depth needed for top-level AO4 marks. Many conclusions were basic or repeated earlier points, without weighing the relative impact. More effective responses considered dependent factors such as industry type, job function, or management style, and used these to support more nuanced judgements, for instance, suggesting that employers may benefit more in cost-driven environments, while employees may benefit more in roles that value autonomy and flexibility. Centres are encouraged to support candidates in developing more detailed analysis and balanced evaluation.

### **Q.8 (a)**

This was the least well-answered question on the paper, with a facility factor of just 13.6%. The concept of quality circles appeared unfamiliar to the vast majority of candidates, and only a small minority were able to provide a clear and accurate definition. Most responses demonstrated confusion with other aspects of quality management, particularly quality assurance or quality control.

Although a minority of candidates made reference to Total Quality Management (TQM) or employee involvement, these references were often disconnected from the core concept and did not address the specific nature or purpose of quality circles.

This item highlights an area of the specification that appears to have received limited attention in preparation. Centres are advised to ensure that candidates are confident in distinguishing between related terms within quality management, such as quality control, quality assurance and quality circles, and are able to define and apply them with precision.

#### **Q.8 (b)**

Most candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of flow production, typically identifying features such as large-scale output, standardisation, and the use of machinery. At least one relevant benefit was usually provided, for example, consistent product quality, high levels of output, or lower unit costs.

Application was a common area for improvement. The stimulus material offered multiple opportunities for contextualisation, including references to the company's high-demand brands (e.g. Andrex, Huggies, Kleenex), its global reach, and its large workforce of 45,000 employees. However, many responses remained theoretical. Better responses explained how flow production could meet the needs of a mass market, ensure consistent quality in widely distributed products, or reduce per-unit costs in a high-volume operation.

#### **Q.8 (c)**

This question was relatively challenging for many candidates, with a facility factor of 49.8%, making it one of the more demanding items on the paper. Most candidates were able to describe the key characteristic of lean production as waste minimisation, but relatively few used precise terminology or identified specific lean techniques (e.g., Kaizen, JIT, cell production). As a result, while AO1 knowledge marks were often awarded, responses frequently lacked the accuracy and specificity required for top-band performance.

Application was limited overall. Candidates missed clear opportunities to contextualise their responses using the rich case study material. For example, they could have explored the potential impact on customers purchasing branded tissue and hygiene products, or on the firm's large workforce or suppliers. Few candidates considered how lean production could affect stakeholders differently, such as employees experiencing greater pressure to maintain efficiency, or customers benefiting from faster delivery or lower prices.

Analysis was usually sound, with most candidates identifying at least two relevant stakeholders, typically employees, customers, or suppliers, and explaining how lean production might affect them. However, development was often generic or unbalanced. Candidates tended to focus on either positive or negative impacts without considering both, or lacked detail in their reasoning.

Evaluation was rarely well-developed. Stronger responses offered weighing or recognised dependent factors, for example, that the impact on suppliers depends on their capacity to meet tighter delivery schedules, or that the effect on employees may vary based on how lean practices are implemented. These responses were uncommon, however, and most evaluation was limited to a basic conclusion or unsupported judgement.

## Summary of Key Points

- Candidates should make full use of the stimulus material in both Sections A and B. Contextual application is essential for achieving higher marks in AO2 and AO3, yet many responses remained generic despite rich case studies.
- Evaluation should be developed, balanced, and supported with qualifying statements or dependent factors. Superficial final sentences or unsupported conclusions do not meet the standard for AO4 Band 3.
- Definitions and technical terms must be revised carefully. Questions such as Q.8(a) and Q.6(a) highlighted gaps in knowledge of core specification content, particularly around quality circles and cost of sales.
- Analytical responses should include logical and extended chains of reasoning. Candidates should not simply identify outcomes, but clearly explain how and why they occur in a business context.
- Quantitative questions require clear workings, correct units, and accurate use of formulae. Candidates should continue to practise these skills, as avoidable errors in questions such as Q.2(b) and Q.6(a) limited performance.

## **BUSINESS**

### **GCE A level**

#### **Summer 2025**

### **COMPONENT 2: BUSINESS ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY**

#### **Overview of the Component**

- Component 2 was answered to a high standard overall, with a good proportion of candidates able to access the higher-level bands. It was apparent that candidates had managed their timings well across the paper, and most were able to attempt all questions. The last question on the paper had an attempt rate of 98.5% and often very long responses, suggesting the majority of candidates were able to finish the paper in the allocated time frame.
- It was pleasing that handwriting appeared to be slightly better than previous series, with a lot fewer scripts being escalated with illegibility issues. It was also really helpful to examiners when candidates used paragraphs effectively to structure the longer responses, which was also slightly improved on previous series.
- For most questions, candidates were writing in a succinct manner, and a higher proportion of responses were finished in the allocated space, aided by the provision of additional space following the response. Candidates who used the extra space at the back or sometimes additional booklets on the most part labelled their responses correctly. However, there was a small proportion of responses that were not labelled correctly which made it difficult for these responses to be accurately clipped.
- Following on again from previous series, the presentation of numerical data has improved, with a higher proportion of responses being presented in the correct format, with the correct units of measurement displayed. There was still a small number of responses that failed to do this, and on occasion the mark scheme penalised for this, particularly on Q.5(a) and 5(b).
- In contrast to previous series, this paper had fewer AO1 marks available in the calculation questions for formula marks, but it was still pleasing to see candidates fully show their workings, as there were often partial marks available for this, especially on questions 5(b) and 6(b). Additionally, for questions that require lots of working out, it is good practice for candidates to underline/highlight in some way their final answer, as sometimes this is difficult to find amongst all the workings.
- Knowledge across the paper was good with most candidates attempting most of the questions. This was perhaps weakest in Q.2(d) and Q.5(b) where candidates were not sure how to approach the questions, and saw the lowest two attempt rates on the paper. Previous series have seen candidates fail to put enough detail into definition questions, but this was slightly better on this series. It remains advisable that two points are made to help achieve the 'detailed definition' descriptor. It is also strongly advised that definitions are included at the start of longer responses too to ensure AO1 marks are awarded, which was mostly a problem in Q.3(e) and Q.4(b). As mentioned in previous reports, analysis chains continue to be brief and undeveloped in a good proportion of scripts, with lots of responses lacking in chains of argument and shorter paragraphs, which was particularly noticeable in Q.6(d).

Candidates who scored well in AO4 marks were able to use context-based judgement to make it relevant to the question and situation. This made these responses stand out and achieve the higher band marks. It also remains important that candidates show evaluation throughout the response of the higher tariff questions and not just saved to the conclusion as this most likely stopped them achieving the highest marks.

## **Comments on individual questions/sections**

### **Q.1**

This question asked candidates to respond to three different parts by showing knowledge of an aim, an objective and then how these two concepts related to each other. This was generally well answered by candidates with a 99.5% attempt rate, and a facilitating factor of 58.6%. Good responses methodically responded with a clear structure to ensure they answered all parts of the question. However, some weaker responses did not address all three requirements so failed to fully respond to the question, or some confused aims and objectives and answered the other way round.

### **Q.2 (a)**

This was the first of the definition questions on the paper. It has a high attempt rate of 98.9%, but a facilitating factor of 53.3%, showing this as an example of when candidates are not showing a good understanding, by giving two points to a definition. It was pleasing to see a description of day-to-day expenses, but then also useful to see a formula for another mark. Really strong responses would refer to it being a measure of the liquidity position of a business, but not many responses did this.

### **Q.2 (b)**

This followed on from the definition and asked candidates to calculate working capital. This was only worth one mark, so no AO1 formula mark, but still pleasing to see candidates showing their workings. This had a 77.7% facilitating factor, showing the majority of candidates were able to answer this, with an attempt rate of 97.9%. An approachable question for candidates who knew the formula.

### **Q.2 (c)**

This calculation was answered much less successfully than the previous one, with a higher attempt rate of 98% but a facilitating factor of 40.9% - the lowest on the whole paper. A lot of candidates guessed at this response and just added the total assets up without deducting the liabilities, which was the most commonly seen incorrect answer.

### **Q.2 (d)**

This question asked candidates to evaluate the liquidity position of the business. This question had the lowest attempt rate on the paper of 92.9%, and the second lowest facilitating factor of 42.9%, suggesting candidates struggle with the concept of liquidity. The strongest responses considered the answer to the calculation in Q.2(b) first, and evaluated that this was a sufficient level of working capital as it was positive. Then, these responses considered more of the information in the context and looked at why actually this business might struggle with liquidity as they offer a lot of credit, and a large amount of assets was likely to be held in illiquid stock due to the nature of the business. This was pleasing to see and showed a good understanding of working capital and items on the balance sheet allowing access to band 2 of the marking grid. Ideally, candidates would add AO3 by developing the impact of being able to/not being able to meet short term payments like creditors and wages, but this was perhaps the skill seen the least frequently.

**Q.3 (a)**

This question asked candidates to show a good understanding of the Delphi Technique. The question had an attempt rate of 96.8%, suggesting a small proportion of candidates did not have the specific knowledge being tested here. The facilitating factor was 60.9%, also suggesting some candidates were not able to fully explain the forecasting technique. Strong candidates explained this process in detail which was pleasing to see, and answered with lots of information, whereas some slightly less successful candidates were able to give a rough idea of the technique but again lacked depth in the explanation. Another common misconception was that candidates responded about qualitative forecasting techniques or expert opinion in general and did not clearly describe the detailed process of the Delphi Technique.

**Q.3 (b)**

This question was one mark asking candidates to calculate the three-point moving average and fill it into the table. The majority put the answer in the place requested, but a small number of candidates answered below the question. Whilst this was still credited, it is advisable candidates fully read the question and follow the presentation requested. This question had a 97.7% attempt rate and the second highest facilitating factor on the paper of 91.8%, suggesting candidates found this an approachable question assessing a relatively straightforward section of the specification.

**Q.3 (c)**

This question asked candidates to plot the moving averages onto the graph and draw a line of best fit through the averages. It was important that candidates did not plot the sales figures, which a small number of responses did. This was the most attempted question on the paper with a 99.2% attempt rate, but a relatively low facilitating factor of 65.1% as there were several inaccuracies seen when drawing the line of best fit. These included not using a ruler or joining up the plots. The best lines of best fit ensured that there were as many points above the line as below, or with some of the points on the line, as long as it remained balanced.

**Q.3 (d)**

This mark was awarded for making a sales prediction for 2025. This was awarded for a valid prediction made from wherever the candidates' line of best fit ended on the graph, ensuring the line continued to 2025. This had a facilitating factor of 80.7%, which was mainly due to candidates either reading off the graph at 2024, or not extending the line to make the prediction, as requested by the question.

**Q.3 (e)**

In this question, candidates were asked to evaluate the use of quantitative forecasting techniques to the context of the business given in the question. This question had an attempt rate of 98.2% and a facilitating factor of 53.7%. The best responses to this question considered a benefit and a problem of using quantitative forecasting, before coming to a judgement. It was pleasing to see strong candidates making the judgement context based, considering that this industry may change quickly with the state of the economy, and so using historical data is not always the most reliable. For AO1 marks, it was pleasing to see candidates use specialist terminology from this topic area such as extrapolation or time series analysis. For AO2 marks, it was useful for candidates to refer to the data and the graph they have completed previously, as well as the qualitative information provided about the market of firewood. A small number of responses started with definitions of quantitative and qualitative data, rather than forecasting techniques, and then the response generically analysed this and not forecasting, which made it difficult to score highly on this question. Additionally, whilst some credit was awarded to those responses who used qualitative forecasting in comparison, the ideal response looked at the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative sales forecasting more specifically.

#### **Q.4 (a)**

This question asked candidates to explain two non-financial measures of performance that could be used and then link into Aldi. For AO1 marks in this question, it was pleasing to see a large proportion of candidates using the methods listed on the specification, most commonly discussing employee attitude surveys and customer attitude surveys. Some candidates also used things that these tools would measure such as labour turnover or customer satisfaction, which were also acceptable ways to achieve the AO1 marks. Most responses were able to access AO2 band 1, by referring to information given in the case such as Aldi becoming carbon neutral. However, stronger responses were able to link these measures into the wider context of supermarkets, such as higher labour turnover rate in low skilled workers, which helped achieve band 2. AO3 was generally well attempted by considering the impact of good performance according to these measures. This question had an attempt rate of 98.5% and a facilitating factor of 59.2%. It should also be noted that a very small proportion of candidates chose to write about market share, showing the importance of reading the question carefully.

#### **Q.4 (b)**

This question asked candidates to evaluate the position of Aldi in the market according to Porters Five Forces framework. This had a slightly lower attempt rate than the other 12 marker on the paper, which was 97.2%, most likely because of the specific knowledge required, but had a slightly higher facilitating factor of 53.1%, showing that candidates responded well to this question when attempted. For AO1 marks, it was a requirement that candidates showed knowledge of all 5 of the forces, reiterating the importance of starting longer response answers with definitions or diagrams of the key term to ensure AO1 marks are gained. A surprisingly high number of candidates wrote the five forces in note form, annotated next to the question, but it would have been more effective if these were written as the first sentence of the response. AO2 was done well in most of the responses, with candidates using both data provided in the context, and wider knowledge of the market. For AO3, stronger candidates were able to link back to the impact the force would have on the profitability of Aldi, which is the main purpose of the model. For AO4, stronger candidates judged the likely level of strength of each force discussed, as well as giving an overall summary of the position in a conclusion. High scoring responses evaluated a minimum of three forces.

#### **Q.5 (a)**

This question required candidates to calculate the payback period of two options. This was answered well overall, with 99% of candidates attempting it, and a facilitating factor of 76.4%. Most candidates successfully calculated the payback of Option 1, as this was more straightforward, and most errors occurred when calculating the number of months for Option 2. Most responses correctly presented the answer in the form of years and months.

#### **Q.5 (b)**

Calculating net present value in this question had the second lowest attempt rate on the paper, of 95.2% and a facilitating factor of 70.6%. Successful candidates showed clear workings and remembered to present the final answer with a £. A small proportion of candidates forgot to take away the initial cost from the total discounted cash flows, which meant 2 of the 4 marks were awarded, if staged workings were shown. This was often difficult to find the final answer amongst lots of workings, so it helped if candidates identified this somehow.

**Q.5 (c)**

This question required candidates to decide which investment option was better by bringing together all the information provided. This was the strongest of the extended response questions with the highest facilitating factor of 61.5%, despite a slightly lower attempt rate of 97.1%. Most candidates were able to correctly interpret the previous calculation questions, and also use some of the presented qualitative information, and so lots of responses were awarded excellent AO2. It was pleasing to see a lot of responses judging the data points and the significance of the difference between them. Additionally, a lot of responses made an overall conclusion, and the strongest ones of these were in context based on Bill's objectives or experience levels. A well answered question overall. A small number of responses defined quantitative and qualitative information again, which is not necessary in a question of this type.

**Q.6 (a)**

This was the final definition question on the paper and asked candidates to define a strategic decision. With an attempt rate of 99.1% lots of candidates felt this was accessible, but with a facilitating factor of 45.7%, the lowest of the definition questions, a sizeable proportion of responses only showed limited understanding and were very brief. Stronger responses linked to several key elements of a strategic decision, including being long term, made by senior managers and affecting the whole business.

**Q.6 (b) (i)**

This required candidates to calculate the probability of failure of the three options. This was answered extremely well with the highest facilitating factor on the paper of 94.8%. It was important candidates showed their response in the allocated space, to ensure demonstration of the skill being requested.

**Q.6 (b) (ii)**

This required candidates to complete the partially drawn decision tree diagram. It had a high attempt rate of 98.6% and a relatively high facilitating factor of 69.5%. This was an accessible 3 marks for the majority of candidates, and some marks were awarded for an incomplete answer where the candidate had forgotten to deduct the initial cost. It was helpful when candidates underlined their final responses to make it stand out amongst all the workings.

**Q.6 (c)**

This question required candidates to consider the information in the decision tree and decide which would be the best option to choose. The strongest candidates were able to identify that the option that generated the highest net return in their calculations (OFR applies) would be the best to choose. Some candidates chose to look at the calculation in Q.6(b)(i) and judge the best option would be the one with the lowest risk of failure. Whilst not the most desired justification, this was also credited. This questions' attempt rate matched the previous question, suggesting candidates confident with the diagram were able to make correct assumptions, and was answered well with a high facilitating factor of 87.1%.

**Q.6 (d)**

This question asked candidates to evaluate the relocation decision from the decision tree diagram, assessing the skills of analysis and evaluation to the highest level on the paper. The attempt rate of this was 98.5% but quite a low facilitating factor of 51.2%. The most successful candidates on this considered a minimum of 3 stakeholders, including the business itself. To score highly, candidates needed to evaluate the impact on each stakeholder. Stronger responses added weighting to this or evaluative counter arguments such as a short-term negative impact but a longer-term positive impact.

Weaker responses considered an impact on each stakeholder, but lots failed to add any evaluation of the impact. The strongest responses for AO2 considered not only the qualitative information about a relocation but the quantitative information provided in the decision tree diagram too. Lots of candidates considered shareholders, but as there was only one owner to the business, this was not valid.

## **BUSINESS**

### **GCE A level**

#### **Summer 2025**

### **COMPONENT 3: BUSINESS IN A CHANGING WORLD**

#### **Overview of the Component**

- Candidates responded well to this paper and an improvement from last year in their ability to access the questions. Several responses showed excellent skills enabling them to access the higher mark bands. There was some variation in the percentage of questions attempted by candidates in section A. Subject knowledge was generally good with question attempt rates. The lowest attempt rate of 93.3% was on question 12. As this question was on the Ansoff matrix it appears that candidates more likely to avoid questions which cannot be answered in general terms. Candidate's timings on the paper seemed to be well planned with the majority of candidates allowing appropriate time for each question which was pleasing to see.
- A higher proportion of typed scripts were submitted this year which correlated with a reduction in those which were difficult to read due to poor handwriting. Where handwriting may be difficult to read, it would be advisable for centres to consider whether candidates should opt to word process their responses. However, many scripts were of good legible quality with better candidates showing a good depth of analysis in their chains of reasoning.
- Knowledge was demonstrated at a good level by most candidates. However, in question 13 it was clear that some candidates lacked clarity around the distinction between outsourcing and offshoring. Many responses only referred to production taking place abroad rather than by an external business. Equally, responses to question 12 too often referred to the Boston matrix or Porter's 5 forces rather than the Ansoff matrix. This type of misunderstanding made it difficult for examiners to award marks.
- Responses to Section A made good use of the case study with many candidates using clear and direct reference to the text as a basis for developing chains of reasoning. In Section B part 1 question, it remained an issue that candidates often made little reference to the situation in the question. It is advisable that candidates are taught how to apply their knowledge to different situations without the option to rely on quoting the case study. Those that were able to do so performed well in this part of the paper.
- With a focus on longer responses, candidates able to construct logical chains of reasoning were advantaged. Those able to integrate theory to support their viewpoint produced some excellent analytical responses. Candidates scoring less well tended to offer a series of undeveloped points with little specification content to support their ideas. The lack of content was particularly evident in questions 13 and 15 where weaker candidates tended to provide opinion rather than supporting arguments with a theory.
- In relation to AO4, exam technique was good with most candidates creating judgements at the end of each paragraph. Fewer candidates offered final judgements and instead concluded responses by reiterated previous information as a summary. It may be more valuable for candidates to consider the earlier issues and weigh up their relative importance.

## **Comments on individual questions/sections**

### **Q.11**

Protectionism has been a newsworthy topic this year in relation to tariffs imposed by the US on other nations. The majority of candidates had a good idea of tariffs and were able to apply this to the case study. Fewer responses saw arguments extend into other areas of protectionism such as legislation, quotas or possible retaliatory action.

The mean mark was 5.2 out of a maximum score of 8. Therefore, most candidates were able to access the majority of marks available. Some candidates spend time discussing free trade rather than focusing on protectionism which limited their ability to gain marks. It is useful for candidates to concentrate on at least 2 methods of protectionism to demonstrate clear knowledge of the area.

### **Q.12**

Due to a lack of subject knowledge amongst some candidates this question had the widest standard deviation. Alternative models included in this response were the Boston matrix and Porter's 5 forces. However, those with a clear knowledge of Ansoff were able to apply their answer in a meaningful way to Apple making good use of the case study.

With an attempt rate of 93.3% this was the least answered question in section A potentially due to the inability to create an acceptable answer through general knowledge. It is crucial that candidates have a clear understanding of the models and theories to generate success responses in the exam. It is advisable for centres to offer revision on these areas in the run up to the exam series as a reminder to candidates of key areas.

### **Q.13**

Outsourcing is an area where many candidates were able to demonstrate good levels of knowledge. It is useful if candidates begin with a definition as many responses did not make clear that the topic under discussion was outsourcing rather than offshoring. Although the overlap between these topics would allow candidates to score a limited number of marks, better candidates outlined the key theme to begin with leaving examiners confident in offering higher marks as clear knowledge was shown.

Some candidates made excellent use of the case study, drawing upon topics such as protectionism and environmental costs to develop lines of analysis. The actions of competitors were also used to create well applied judgements. Therefore, those clearly accessing the case study were able to perform very well.

**Q.14**

With an attempt rate of 95.9% this was the second least answered question from section A. Although this question did not require the candidates to access the case study some continued to apply their response to Apple. Whilst this approach was useful for many candidates as they could contrast the leadership of Steve Jobs to other management styles, for others, it seemed to hinder their ability to explore the impact of leadership styles. Many candidates considered different leadership styles in varied situations which helped create some successful evaluations.

Most candidates were able to format their responses to this question by completing separate paragraphs on each stakeholder. This strategy made it easy for examiners to ensure all three stakeholders were covered in the answer. Other candidates did not complete all three stakeholders or discussed all three stakeholders together in one paragraph making it more difficult to show clear independent judgements for each stakeholder group.

**Q.15**

With a facility factor of 62.3 this was the strongest average response in section A. Environmental targets and policies were clearly laid out in the case study and many candidates were able to build on this information to develop suitable lines of analysis culminating in valid judgements. Better candidates went further into the case study and focused on the suitability of Apple's policies in relation to those offered by competitors, which in the case of Microsoft were environmentally more beneficial.

Many candidates looked at other factors such as the ability to stave off criticism from pressure groups, remaining ahead of legal changes and creating an acceptable company image. Strong candidates underpinned this with theory such as the ability to justify the high price of Apple through claims of environmental sourcing.

**Q.21**

Approximately 35% of candidates opted for question 2 making it the second most popular option in Section B. Whilst explaining the factors that have contributed to the globalisation of food manufacturing businesses, strong candidates applied to the situation by discussing issues such as refrigeration, speed of transport and increasing migration leading to more exposure to different food types. Weaker responses ignored the food manufacturing element of this question and offered points which could relate to any business. Due to the variation in application, the standard deviation is the highest of all Section B, part 1 questions at 2.1 marks. It is important for the candidate to ensure that their response must be applied strongly to the theme in the question to generate high level AO2.

**Q.22**

As with all part 2 responses in Section B there were no application marks available. However, strong candidates offered situations in different industries as a means of developing judgement marks. Some candidates supported arguments using theory elements such as Porter's 5 forces to enhance their judgements. Others focused on the benefits or problems of free trade or protectionism to UK businesses as a means of using theory to support arguments. This helped to develop higher level AO3 marks and provided a bases for informed AO4. With a standard deviation of 2.9 this offered the widest range of responses.

Most candidates were able to make suitable judgements. Weaker candidates, if discussing an advantage in the main body of a paragraph seemed to tag a disadvantage on the end of each paragraph as a judgement. However, it is important to note that true judgements should relate to the proceeding line of analysis.

**Q.31**

This was the most popular option being answered by approximately half of respondents. With an average mark of 5.3 candidates performed slightly better than those completing question 21. Whilst many responses made use of social media, apps and websites, weaker responses focused on production technology such as CAD, CAM and robotics. These were not appropriate to this question and centres would be advised to clearly separate these topics when teaching to help candidates see the areas as different parts of the specification.

Frequently used application points were repeat purchases for consumable goods, loyalty tokens which could lead to free menu items in the future and push notification to apps around mealtimes. These were all helpful in demonstrating clear application to the scenario.

**Q.32**

As this question related to technology in general candidates could tap into a wide range of areas. Both marketing and production technology were well used by candidates. A more significant issue was in responses not fully answering the question. Instead, candidates sometimes focused on either the business or stakeholders side of the question, but not both. When considering the impact on business it is useful for candidates to consider objectives the business may wish to achieve and what part technology may play in the achievement of these goals.

This question achieved the lowest mean score of the part B section 2 questions, 10.9. This was mainly due to candidates answering in relation to the impact on the business or its stakeholders but not both. Evaluation was often clear within responses with most candidates opting to assess one stakeholder or one business aim per paragraph. Better candidates also considered the limitations or applicability of technology in various industries.

**Q.41**

With the highest mean response of 6.1 but the fewest responses 14.4%, this question seemed the right option for the few who selected it. Candidates commonly selected legal areas such as minimum wage fitting to low skilled jobs or food standards. This was perhaps the best applied response in a consistent manner with responses often examining two or three areas of law. Candidates were not required to know detailed areas of any law but instead to consider the implications for this relatively low skill environment handling perishable items, which many were able to do appropriately.

**Q.42**

In a similar way to part 41, this response had the highest mean score of the part B section 2 questions, 11.6 out of 20. Candidates often focused on fiscal and monetary policy and were able to use the technical areas of economics to develop strong AO3 lines of argument. Trade agreements and legal constraints were other areas of focus providing candidates with a good theoretical structure to build their arguments.

Although this question is directly from the specification, a few did not seem to understand the option they had chosen, discussing simply whether business and government were friendly toward each other or not. Due to the lack of technical detail in these responses, examiners found it difficult to award higher level marks. In general, it is advisable that candidates take some time to assess which question in section B is likely to provide them with the best average score over the available 30 marks before beginning their response.

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