

GCSE
Business
8132/1

Report on the examination

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Overall

The majority of students were able to complete all questions on the paper. The quality of handwriting and written communication was so poor for some answers that it was very difficult to read. A number of students who used the extra space did not indicate the questions they were answering. As in previous years often extra space used does not add anything to their answer and students must realise that being concise and keeping to the space given is better than trying to write more of the same skills.

Students were able to access the data provided in the items for sections B and C reasonably well to support their answers. However, there is a tendency to simply copy lots of information from the item. This is not enough, and students need to apply their knowledge and understanding to the context as well as providing analysis.

In questions that required a judgement to be made students often made a simple judgement or decision but failed to support this with any valid argument.

Students need to be encouraged to plan out the 12-mark questions as many wrote three or four pages repeating themselves several times and as such did not gain any extra marks.

A stem is given for the 6- and 9-mark questions. This is used to help students focus their responses. Many students are not effectively using this. In particular evaluative questions could have used this to consider the most important factor.

Section A

Questions 1.1 to 1.6

The six multiple choice questions enabled students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding across a range of the GCSE subject content.

- Question 4, on digital communication elicited the most correct responses.
- The most challenging question proved to be number 5, almost half of students incorrectly answered this question.
- The responses to question 5 suggested some lack of understanding between average unit costs with response C proving to be the most common incorrect answer.
- More than a third of students were not able to correctly answer question 3, most of these students thought that economic influences are changes in legislation.
- Although the majority of students correctly answered question 1, the most popular incorrect answer was - allows for specialisation.
- For questions 2 although well answered, the most popular incorrect answer was marginally LTD and Sole trader however B was similarly chosen incorrectly a large number of times.

Question 1.7

Generally answered well and proved accessible to almost two thirds of students who gained full marks. Students demonstrated a good understanding of the factors affecting the choice of supplier. Location, price and quality were the most commonly identified factors. However, some students gave full sentence responses, which are not required for questions using the

command word 'identify'. Repetition was seen in some responses which limited the mark given.

Question 1.8

The reasons for becoming an entrepreneur were well understood but then the explanation was often very weak. Therefore, more than 40% gained one mark or less. The most popular answers given were being their own boss and having flexible working hours, in order to meet family needs, very few commented on a gap in the market or pursuing a hobby or interest. Some students lost a mark through listing points rather than developing one point as the question asked.

Question 1.9

Students often gave valid reasons for training but failed to develop their answers in the context of 'current employees', which limited the opportunity to gain full marks. Therefore, almost 50% gained one mark or less. The majority of correct answers were based around training needed for updating skills or to be competent with new technology or new Health and Safety rules. Many were then able to explain their answer. However, this question was frequently misinterpreted and answered in relation to induction training rather than training current employees.

Question 1.10

This question out of the whole of section A had the highest number of students who gained no marks or failed to respond to the question, more than 50% of all students. There were a number of reasons why this question was poorly answered.

- Few students focused on the demands of the question and a significant number of students confused decentralisation with delaying.
- A lack of secure understanding of decentralisation was seen in many student responses, as students could not accurately relate their answers to head office and local branches in terms of decision making.
- If students received a mark for identifying a problem with decentralisation many went on to explain the disadvantage further, rather than how decentralisation created the problem. As a result, a large number of students who showed some knowledge were unable to gain full marks on this question.

The most common responses were communication and loss of control.

Question 1.11

Most students understood the concept of giving up one thing for another as a basic definition but failed to develop their example further. Students who used an example to support their answer were often able to secure both marks. There were many students who did not understand the term 'opportunity cost' and as a result linked their answers to the risk of setting up a business. Therefore, the number of students who gained no marks for this question was more than a quarter.

Question 1.12

The marks on this question were spread, almost a third gained full marks but the explanation of the document proved problematic for a large number.

The most popular answers were job description, person specification and CVs.

There were a number of reasons why this question was not well answered for some students.

- A small number did not clearly state the document therefore the development mark could not be awarded.
- Occasionally, students referred to documents given by applicants after they had been appointed which were not relevant to the question.
- A large number of students incorrectly gave job analysis or shortlisting, these are processes carried out by the business not a type of document.
- Other common misconceptions were criminal record, DBS, passport, ID none of which are acceptable documents. Documents listed on the specification are the only ones which were accepted.

Section B

Question 2.1

Many students were able to identify a benefit of lean production “reduced waste” but the explanation of how lean production achieved this was not made. A large number of students failed to access the second mark due to analysing a benefit of lean production rather than explaining how lean production achieves the benefit. The best responses made the link between waste and storage space.

Question 2.2

This question tested numeracy skills and understanding of exchange rates. Many students failed to use the data in their response and simple statements such as “the value is increasing” were not awardable”. Students must be prepared for data questions and be able to describe a trend. Often answers referred to imports rather than exports. Many students were explaining the effect on the price of exporting for the business, rather than the price of products in China. Only a small number of students gained full marks and almost half of students failed to gain any marks on this question.

Question 2.3

A well answered question with more almost 50% of students gaining at least 2 marks on this question. However, despite the question clearly stating to use the data in Figure 2 a small number failed to do this. Those students who were able to use the data also went on to identify a suitable business response. The most popular answers were finding a cheaper supplier, or increase the selling price. The majority of students who were not able to gain full marks did not include either £s or 000s.

Question 2.4

The topic of this 9-mark questions proved accessible to a large number of students with two thirds of students able to achieve at least a sound line of argument.

- Many students were able to identify that the local supplier was more expensive, for context, and explain that this would impact on profits.
- Students were able to identify the impact on using storage space to increase production capacity.

- Information from the case study was used well. Arguments against used the information that raw materials from China were a low price, and there was discount for buying in bulk. Often counter argument used the information that the storage space could be used to expand production.

There were a number of reasons why some answers lack depth.

- Many student responses contained a series of underdeveloped points which were not explored in light of the context accurately. Some students discussed speed of sending out orders as an advantage of JIT, without qualifying this in terms of the extra production capacity that D@SO would gain as a result of JIT.
- Some students spoke of stock not going out of date, which was not relevant to this context.
- Evaluation was often repetitive of previous lines of analysis.

It is not necessary for students to consider both sides of the argument in depth and then a third paragraph as a final conclusion. When they use this approach often the conclusion is then repetitive. A better approach would be to analyse one side and then build their counterargument into an evaluative second paragraph. This can also save students' time.

Question 2.5

A large majority of students were able to gain one mark for identifying reasons such as staff leaving, employees leaving or new skills needed. However, a small minority were able to then gain the development mark and explain why this would require a new employee.

Question 2.6

A question which elicited a range of different answers and marks were spread. Some students did not actually answer the question but simply described the production department. Very few referred to the span of control changing with the introduction of the two new supervisors. A number of students incorrectly said the organisational structure would become flatter as the span of control became narrower, indicating a poor understanding of organisational structures and impact of change on these structures.

Context mainly came from Gwen having more staff to supervise. These students then were able to identify that Gwen's span of control was becoming wider and the effect that this would have.

Most students were able to give at least some reasonable development to their points, but few were able to analyse fully. Those that did gain detailed analysis were able to fully explain the impact the change would have on the rest of the organisation for example the impact on production staff and quality of work.

Question 2.7

On the whole this question proved marginally more challenging than the other 9-mark question. Those students that clearly understand the meaning of a job share were then able to identify the benefit of the two employees being experienced and having worked at the business for a number of years, for context. Linking this to recruitment and impact of promotion on the employees.

Counter arguments focused on the drawback of the employees not being able to agree on how the role should work, for context. With many then relating this to controlling the quality of the goods produced as workers may be given different messages depending on who was in charge on that day.

Students who were not able to gain many marks on this question wrongly assumed job share would mean higher wages or that the workers would work shifts. Knowledge of the benefits of full versus part time are required and this is what students were expected to analyse.

As with the other 9-mark question evaluation skills were often not present with students often repeating their previous lines of analysis. Conclusions were too brief and must contain new evidence to support the overall judgement.

Section C

Question 3.1

The majority of students showed an understanding of customer service. Most popular answers were product knowledge and post sales service. Incorrect answers were mainly focused on 'quality' or described a benefit of customer service rather than an activity. Although this was a knowledge questions it was decided to allow reference to the case study to give greater accessibility to students. In future this may be restricted to specific generic terms as listed in the specification.

Question 3.2

The students' responses to the 4-mark questions this year suggested they were better prepared and guided on how to answers them. A larger number of responses moved into sound knowledge this year. However, a small number did not clearly show knowledge of the business concept at the start of their answer, this is important in these types of questions. The majority of students were able to identify an example of sustainability at CP but answers then gave a benefit of sustainability rather than explain sustainability. The question linked to a 'way' and therefore answers should have focused on 'how' CP achieves sustainability rather than 'why.'

Question 3.3

This proved to be the most accessible 6-mark question on the paper. Many showed a good understanding of the benefits of good customer service to a business by suggesting repeat customers, good reviews and recommendations. Although students are struggling to gain a detailed line of argument for one benefit. The change to two reasons next year will help improve access to these questions.

There were a number of reasons why answered lack depth.

- Some students developed chains of arguments focused on the benefits to the customer rather than the business, limiting their marks as not answering the question.
- Many students provided generic answers rather than linking their answers directly to the context of CP.

- Many students repeated themselves in their development of their points, referring frequently to more sales and profit without contextualising how and why these could come about or were important to CP.

Question 3.4

Percentages continue to prove challenging for a large number of students with less than half of students gaining full marks on this question. Almost a quarter of students gained no marks or did not attempt the question.

Many students did not round correctly which led them to miscalculate the daily commission; the decimals were important for accurate workings and the final answer due to the question relating to currency.

Centres are encouraged to ensure that students show workings clearly for examiners to allow them to follow and award OFR. The final answer must be in the space provided. From workings shown it did appear that a small number of students did not have a calculator available to use. Often then errors in the final 15% calculation were made.

Method 2 was the most popular route to use. However, a number of errors were made such as adding the 15% to the £2500 or multiplying by 6.

Question 3.5

More than 50% of students were able to correctly calculate the daily wage cost. Those students that recognised that the cost of Santa was fixed were able to gain maximum marks for this question. Of the large proportion that gained only one mark achieved this by calculating £720.

Common errors were failing to include Santa or multiplying the pay for Santa by six. A small number of students gained no marks as they were using the incorrect data on sales of extras.

Question 3.6

Students were able to give sound explanations of what commission is but many failed to bring in information from the case study. Therefore a smaller number gained full marks compared to the 4 -mark question on sustainability and many answers were limited to 'Basic' due to the missed opportunities to use the context. Those that did access the sound level linked the benefit of commission to motivation and the result this would have on sales numbers. It was rare for students to refer to the figures or the previous calculation that linked to commission specifically. Many students did not demonstrate a secure understanding of commission within their responses and a large number gained no marks as their answers were too vague.

Question 3.7

Students for this question failed to use the stem to help them answer the question. Which told them that technologies were being used to communicate. This paper tests knowledge of digital technology from Unit 2 which outlines that students should understand that digital technology is changing the way businesses communicate with stakeholders. E-commerce is not part of this. On the whole students who used the stem and understood clearly that this is what digital technology is all about were able to answer the question. Most of the better responses were able to make their answer specific to CP by using information on the

interactive screens being used to make bookings. There were some contextualised answers focused on reduced staff costs at the escalators. However, these were in the minority.

There were a number of reasons why answers lacked depth or failed to gain sound or even basic analysis.

- There were some very generic answers relating to digital technology and students did not use the context that was presented in the case linked to the interactive map and booking for Santa.
- Misconceptions around what digital technology is with many responses favouring benefits of using social media and having website/ecommerce which restricted their marks.

Question 3.8

The majority of students were able to give arguments for and against both bullet points and were able to bring in relevant context. Few however fully answered the question which expecting them to explain which option would have the biggest impact on CP maintaining their current objectives, so their answers were weaker due to this.

Generally, students understood the change to a plc but tended to refer to the benefit of having Naia Hayat to help the business, a few did comment on the problem if she got a majority share and the changes that she might make and how this might affect the staff and the objectives of the business.

Most picked up on the change of suppliers not being liked by the current customers due to the change of quality.

There were a number of reasons why answers lacked depth or failed to gain detailed analysis

- This question lacked developed analysis. Whilst many students were able to write significant quantity, indicating that time was not a limiting factor, the content was weak and repetitive. Lacking contextual analysis.
- Some answers referred to an advantage of either option being that funds could be raised to develop the website; whilst this was true, the development then drifted away from the question as to how a website / ecommerce would help the business rather than staying tightly focused on the option in question.
- A large number of responses listed many points and failed to develop any. When students are focused on writing a list of points that, at times, were linked to the case study but were centred on the benefits and drawbacks of each option this limits their level to basic or sound at best.

There were a number of reasons why answers lacked evaluation

- The final decision about what option would have the biggest impact was poorly attempted with many simply repeating what they had said before
- Most students were able to identify that the investors experience was at odds with the aims of the business. Less were able to identify the new supplier deal was at odds with their objectives
- Conclusions often just repeated information that had already been discussed.

General points to note

- Relating the analysis and evaluation to the last sentence of the question which here was objectives, is the key to gain the higher levels in the mark scheme.
- In the main, answers are overly long, using extra pages, with little analysis shown. As in previous years a large number of students using extra pages are not improving their levels as the demonstration of skills stays the same.
- It is not necessary for students to consider the advantaged and disadvantages of both bullets in depth and then a fifth paragraph as a final conclusion. When they use this approach often the conclusion is then repetitive. A better approach would be to analyse the benefits of both options and then build their reservations/drawback of the bullets into an evaluative third paragraph. This can also save student's time.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.