Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International A Level

In Business Studies (WBS04)

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Introduction

There were only a relatively small number of entrants for the January paper on this unit. Nevertheless, the paper seemed to discriminate well with candidates accessing a wide range of marks, with some good, and occasionally very good, responses to the questions set. Having said that, there were also some very weak responses that showed little understanding of, or even familiarity with, the specification content and the standard expected of an A2 candidate.

The main reasons for some otherwise able students underachieving were the usual ones of not heeding command words and not reading the questions carefully enough. Command words are still being ignored by a sizeable number. Instructions to 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' were not followed by some candidates.

Some of the students missed out on marks because they did not answer the question that was set. This was particularly the case with question 3 and 5. Some students missed out several whole questions.

It is worth reminding future students of the need to apply proper context to all responses. Repeating generic or stock answers or just copying the text out will not access the higher levels of the mark scheme.

SECTION A

Question 1a

This was mostly well answered with a significant number of candidates gaining the full 2 marks.

Question 1b

Although most candidates had some idea of inflation, many struggled to define it accurately enough for the second mark.

Question 2

Responses were mixed for this question, some candidates seemingly lacking knowledge of what an indicator of growth was. Too many students confused the effect on the economy with the effect on a business and too many were unable to provide context when there were multiple opportunities for using the data in the case study. A few wasted time trying to offer evaluation which was unable to gain any marks.

Question 3

A number of candidates chose to answer the question by discussing the impact on the Vietnamese economy rather than a business as stated in the question. This meant that they failed to gain any marks. Those that did address the question did reasonably well, with widespread understanding of the potential benefits of a trade bloc to Vietnamese businesses. The usual weaknesses lay

either in lack of context, or failing to analyse sufficiently to gain the two analysis marks available for each impact.

Question 4

Whilst the majority of candidates analysed this well, with a clear understanding of the importance of labour costs in a labour intensive production process, too few were able to offer an evaluation of how this importance might be less significant than other factors, such as ease of doing business, geographical location, land costs or infrastructure. Many otherwise good answers were limited to 7 out of 10 because candidates had failed to put the response into context.

Question 5

Some candidates made a similar error to question 3 and focused on individual firms and/or Samsung itself rather than the impact on Vietnam as directed by the question. Apart from that, this was one of the better answered questions. Students seemed confident in analysing the likely impact of increased employment on the economy and often followed this with the adverse impact of potential pollution or exploitation of the labour force. However, this evaluation tended to be less contextual.

SECTION B

The case studies were accessible to students and acted as good platforms from which students could apply relevant business theories.

Question 6

This was generally well answered. Most candidates could offer some merits of the advantages of expansion by takeover and used supporting evidence extracted from the case study. Evaluation was more challenging and was not always perceptive, with students resorting to generic stock answers with little or no context. In both the 20 mark answers, there are 8 marks for evaluation. Candidates should be aware that they must reinforce their answers with examples if they are to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 7

The case study allowed candidates to extract useful supportive context for analysis. Most students offered several strands of relevant arguments. However, as with question 6, evaluation was weaker and less contextualised with fewer strands and a lack of a convincing conclusion. Nevertheless, there was a good range of responses which differentiated candidates well. Higher marks and levels were reached with the introduction of relevant examples other than Evans consoles and for fully evaluating the extent of the benefits and consideration of how a niche market may change in the long term.

For the students that did not do so well in the 20 mark questions, it was usually because they had simply copied out, or re-written, the evidence with little or no attempt at analysis or evaluation. Conclusions were rare indeed.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

• Do read the question carefully and answer the question that is set

• Do watch out for command words such as Assess or Evaluate

• Do use examples to illustrate your argument

• Do use the language of the subject and avoid generalities

• Do watch your timing and do not spend too long on one question

• Do write concisely

• Do add a conclusion to the longer questions