



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner

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Pearson Edexcel International A Level in
Business Studies WBS04

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This was the second time that this exam has been taken in October and again there were only a relatively small number of entrants. Nevertheless, the paper seemed to discriminate well with candidates accessing a wide range of marks, with some good, and often very good, responses to the questions set.

The standard of answers was on the whole, slightly higher than the previous October exam. 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, which was widely misinterpreted. 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.

Question 1a

This was reasonably well answered with a significant number of candidates gaining the full 2 marks. Where this was not the case it was often due to just stating that 'lots' of machines were used rather than bringing in a comparative element with labour and a reference to production.

Question 1b

Mostly well answered, students were able to use price and value and the important relationship of one currency 'in terms of another' well. Time was often wasted explaining the conditions of appreciation/depreciation after gaining the necessary marks.

Question 2

Many good answers but some failed to develop an analytical point and gained just 4 marks for knowledge and application. Time was spent repeating the evidence and this often led to answers missing the necessary development. There were plenty of opportunities to apply the answers to the case study. Only a few attempted one reason or repeated the first point.

Question 3

This question caused problems for a significant number of candidates who ignored the 'joint venture' aspect of the question and simply wrote about why

Indonesia was a good location for production. Answers would often not address the reasons which were specific to the reasons for forming a joint venture. Instead, they concentrated on the 'access to raw materials/cheap labour' reasons for entering the market, which is perfectly possible to achieve without entering a joint venture. This misconception led to many answers only gaining part, or none, of the available marks. There are still some candidates that treat this too much like a 6 mark questions and fail to add a further analytical point to their reason.

Question 4

Most answered this well, being able to give a clear balance between the increased opportunities to trade abroad compared to the drawbacks of increased competition and the penetration of domestic markets by competitors from other members of the trade bloc. Some failed to apply their answers on both sides of the arguments and some candidates simply copied large parts of the extract. A number of candidates answered this incorrectly by focusing on the benefits to Indonesia as a country rather than the impact on domestic/Indonesian businesses.

Question 5

There was a wide range of responses to this question including many thoughtful and thorough ones. There were plenty of opportunities for application and in most cases they were used well. However, there were a number of candidates that misunderstood the question and answered it from an FDI point of view and explained how Indonesia could benefit rather than Toyota, this limited the marks awarded.

Question 6

A good set of responses to this question, with balanced arguments that gave many opportunities to apply context to the responses. It was pleasing to see many examples being used from wider reading and study to reinforce arguments. Many candidates have been taught good exam technique and they developed several strands to their arguments, both for and against. A high proportion of candidates got into L4 with balance with some application, with many of the responses sitting mid-level. Many candidates found this an accessible question, showing good understanding of the different stakeholders that attempt to control MNC behaviour.

Question 7

Perhaps not quite as well answered as question 6, but again there were some very good responses, with many understanding that price is only one element of the marketing mix. This allowed them to produce a balanced and evaluative argument reaching into Level 4. Some candidates used other equally valid lines

of evaluation such as infrastructure and political stability being more important when deciding to enter an emerging market but most compared it to the marketing mix. Those that did not do so well often concentrated on price alone, comparing different pricing strategies which was not the focus of the question.

There was very little evidence to suggest that candidates did not have enough time to complete the paper.

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

