



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2019

Pearson Edexcel International A Level in
Business (WBS11)

Unit 1 Marketing and people

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This was the first time that this exam has been taken 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. Many candidates showed evidence of good understanding of the topics in the specification. However, there were also some very weak responses that showed little understanding of the specification content and the standard expected.

It does appear that some students are unfamiliar with the command words. A large number of students were providing a generic one-sided argument for the 'discuss' questions. The discuss questions, alongside assess and evaluation questions require a balanced and well contextualised answers from candidates.

Many students also failed to use the evidence provided to them in the source booklet. It is worth reminding future students of the need to apply suitable 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 well answered with a significant number of candidates gaining the full 2 marks. Some student however wrote about the Boston Matrix or other product portfolio analysis strategies rather than providing understanding of the term product portfolio.

Question 1b

Many students were able to provide the formula for price elasticity of demand and also calculate the percentage change in income. However, a very large percentage of candidates did not show the answer as a negative answer and were not able to access full marks.

Question 1c

A wide variety of responses were seen for this question. There were some very good answers with students showing knowledge of mass markets and applying the theory well to Primark. Some answers failed to apply any context to the given business and so gained just 4 marks for knowledge and analysis. However, there were some answers that focussed generally on the problems faced by Primark rather than addressing problems of operating in a mass market.

Question 1d

This question caused problems for a significant number of candidates who did not show a good understanding of cost plus pricing. Whilst many could provide a definition, they failed to show context and valid chains of reasoning, with many students incorrectly associating cost plus prices with high prices and high profits. Very few responses provided a counterargument for this question and the responses on the whole were generic and one-sided. The misconceptions of cost plus pricing resulted in few students reaching level 3 of the mark scheme.

Question 1e

This seems to be a topic that most students had knowledge and appreciation of. Many answered this well, and were able to show a good understanding of ethical sourcing and its importance in society today. It was good to see many examples being used from wider reading and study to reinforce arguments. Many candidates used the evidence from the source booklet to provide context to the answers. There were still many answers that did not give clear balance to the answer which prevented them from achieving the highest level 4 marks.

Question 2a

This was well answered with a significant number of candidates gaining the full 2 marks. A limited number simply provided an example of an entrepreneur or repeated evidence from the case study. Some candidates failed to show appreciation that an entrepreneur is a risk taker.

Question 2b

In the main, it was evident that many students have been taught how to construct supply and demand diagrams and were able to show the shift in supply. Some students confused supply and demand curves or showed a shift in demand rather than supply. Some students failed to score the full four marks as they did not mark price and quantity on the equilibrium points. Also it is worth noting that if students shift **both** demand and supply curves they will not be awarded the marks.

Question 2c

Many good answers with students showing knowledge of demand factors. Some answers failed to apply any context to the given business and so gained just 4 marks for knowledge and analysis. However, there were some answers that focussed on supply factors other than demand factors. Also some answers failed to pick up analysis marks as their response did not adequately explain the cause or consequence of the demand factor, and simply wrote 'this factor will increase or decrease demand'.

Question 2d

As with question 1d many students wrote a one-sided argument and failed to fully appreciate the command word 'discuss'. The benefits of segmentation were generally correct and well written with good use of the evidence provided to candidates. If students do not provide reasonable balance then achieving the marks at the top of level 3 becomes extremely difficult.

Question 2e

A reasonable set of responses to this question, with many students showing good understanding of the topic and using the evidence well. Some failed to provide a balanced argument and an awareness of competing arguments. A small number of students are still simply copying large amounts of text from the case study provided without using that information to analyse and evaluate. A high proportion of candidates achieved level 3 but I would suggest more needs to be done on the teaching of evaluative points on the topic of test marketing.

Question 3

A wide range of answers were given, and it was encouraging that most students understood the topic and were able to demonstrate good understanding. However, many of the responses were disappointing as few used the evidence given. In the main the answers provided were generic in nature and simply listed advantages and disadvantages of recruitment methods. Many answers failed to propose a solution or recommendation for Ikea.

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 watch out for command words such as Discuss Assess or Evaluate
- Do use examples and evidence in the source booklet to illustrate your argument
- Ensure graphs are fully labelled
- Do not simply list everything you know about a topic, ensure it is relevant and it is written in the context of the business you have been asked to write about
- Do add a conclusion or recommendation for the longer questions