



GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Business
A Level
Summer 2024

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.¹

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.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

¹ 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.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner Eduqas

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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.

Throughout all three exams, candidates demonstrated an overall good knowledge and understanding in a number of topic areas from across the full A level content, although there were also quite a few gaps in knowledge and some incorrect understanding of key business concepts. However, AO1 marks are often missed through the lack of detail or precision.

Component 1 and 2 have a high weighting of quantitative skill assessment and there was a general 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.

Most candidates seem to take care in reading the question carefully and recognising the demands of the various command words, however, a significant proportion of candidates are still misreading questions and not fully understanding the requirements of certain command words. Candidates should read questions carefully before answering and underline and plan what is required from the question. Attention should be given to this when preparing candidates for the examinations. Candidates should also take care in identifying command words in order to recognise the skills being assessed in the question.

The quality of written communication was a concern in all three exams. Some scripts were barely legible. If the examiner cannot read the writing, then the examiner cannot award any marks. Centres are encouraged to consider this for future series and determine if candidates need extra support to write their exam responses.

Application is still a skill that needs improving. Candidates must be aware that application involves using the data to analyse and evaluate not simply listing important data from the stems and case studies. It was pleasing however, to see more successful attempts to apply responses in the Part (a) section of the essay in Component 3.

Candidates should be encouraged and given an opportunity in the classroom to answer extended response questions. They should take a key point and develop it giving a logical and fully explained argument rather than a long answer that reads in a list-like style with lots of stated points that are not developed. Quality over quantity. Candidates should also be advised to carefully consider the mark allocation of each question to allocate sufficient time for each question.

For AO4, candidates should be encouraged to give responses where evaluation takes place throughout the answer rather than solely in the final paragraph.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Exam Technique including AO4	AS and A Level Business Eduqas	Materials from previous CPD events
Approaching the different components	Resource (eduqas.co.uk)	Aimed at learners, this Exam Walk Through resource offers practical hints and tips on how to effectively approach questions in the examination paper.

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COMPONENT 1: BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AND FUNCTIONS

Overview of the Component

This examination paper demonstrated a generally high level of accessibility for candidates, as indicated by the facility factor for each question. The attempt rate ranged from 95.1% to 100% (up from 97.3% in 2023) across all questions. The mean mark for the paper was 55 (68.8%), compared to 53.9 (67.4%) in 2023, showing a slight improvement in performance and demonstrating consistency in the demand and accessibility of the paper.

As might be expected from a similar mean mark compared to last year, candidates in this series also demonstrated good performance throughout the paper. Candidates generally showcased knowledge and understanding of various concepts effectively while presenting well-structured arguments in higher tariff questions. The improvement in general performance reinforces the effective work by teachers and centres in preparing candidates for the assessment, as well as the candidates' efforts in undertaking the examination. However, there remains some clear opportunity for further improvement, particularly in understanding specific concepts, using case studies effectively, and most importantly, developing more sophisticated evaluation skills.

Similar to the 2023 series, timing did not present itself as an issue, and an increasing number of candidates used the extra space and extra sheets effectively. It was rare to see candidates overwriting a particular response at the expense of others. However, similar to previous sessions, legibility of some handwriting again presented a challenge in reading responses easily, which inevitably would have caused some candidates to lose marks if creditworthy information was written in an illegible way. Providing appropriate feedback on handwriting legibility is important to ensure candidates' handwriting is easily readable and therefore examinable.

Overall, candidates were well aware of how to approach responses that used different command words and, in many cases, used the stimulus material in most questions, demonstrating solid analysis and evaluation skills.

Quantitative skills are assessed in Component 1 papers, along with potential reference to business models and theories, including diagrams. As ever, it is important that candidates are well-versed in all such aspects of the specification to effectively show their understanding, including evaluating their importance, use, and impact on a business and stakeholders. The examination paper contained topics from a wide range of areas, consistent with other papers from Business Opportunities and Business Functions, representing a broad spectrum of business concepts. Candidates should ensure they are well-prepared in these areas for future series. Furthermore, assessment objectives were assessed in line with required weightings, and candidates can expect a range of questions that assess each assessment objective.

Based on the facility factor, the most accessible questions for candidates were Q.2(b) (FF: 93%) and Q.1(b) (FF: 90.5%). In contrast, the least accessible questions were Q.3(d) (FF: 48.5%) and Q.7(b) (FF: 58.9%).

The commentary on each question follows, but in order to improve for future series, the following general advice is provided: Candidates should strive to provide well-detailed and well-balanced judgments, demonstrating confidence in their writing and achieving Band 3 in AO4. Candidates should use the stimulus material in all questions, incorporating it effectively into their answers. Candidates should thoroughly review the exam specification, paying particular attention to key term definitions and concept explanations. Additionally, candidates should consult previous mark schemes to better understand the marking bands for different questions and the indicative content that supports analysis and evaluation skills.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1 (a)** Many candidates were able to calculate the increase in Aldi's market share and express their answer correctly. However, a minority of candidates did not show an understanding of how to calculate market share. Quantitative skills formed part of the paper, and it was important for candidates to correctly calculate and interpret the quantitative elements of the component.
- (b)** The vast majority of candidates correctly described the changes in market share using the data in the table effectively. This was pleasing, and candidates can expect data to be presented in various forms in future examination series. Parts (a) and (b) of this question were generally accessible to candidates.
- Q.2 (a)** Many candidates provided a good definition of the term "market," expressing their understanding clearly. In a minority of cases, candidates did not know the definition or only demonstrated partial understanding. Candidates can expect AO1 skills to be assessed in various question types, and confidently knowing how to define key terms is important for gaining marks. Testing candidates on key terms to provide feedback on the accuracy of the definition would be useful.
- (b)** This was the most accessible question for candidates in the examination paper. Candidates clearly understood the reasons why small businesses survive and used the case study effectively. The indicative content in the mark scheme reflected the responses provided by candidates well.
- (c)** This was a relatively demanding question for some candidates, representing the third lowest question in terms of the facility factor (61.4%). The general approach taken by candidates was to define the term SME, often including one or two characteristics, followed by common benefits such as job creation, tax contribution to the government, and provision of products and services. Many candidates did not include any counterpoints, and evaluation was mainly superficial. The indicative content reflected the wide range of responses. Better responses included balanced analysis and detailed, supported judgements. To improve in similar high-tariff questions that include marks for analysis and evaluation, candidates should present points on both sides of the argument and provide a well-balanced evaluation.

- Q.3**
- (a)** This was answered correctly by many candidates who clearly understood how to calculate contribution per unit, but the most common mistake was not including the £ sign.
 - (b)** This was answered correctly by many candidates who understood how to calculate the break-even point, but the most common mistake was including a £ sign rather than expressing the answer as units or the number of experiences. A useful activity based on the feedback for Q.3(a) and Q.3(b) could involve ensuring candidates know the correct units for different calculations to gain easy marks for the correct expression of the final answer.
 - (c)** Many candidates were able to suggest, based on their calculation for Q.3(b) including any own figure responses, which location would be better based on the break-even point. The most common incorrect approach taken by candidates was considering information other than the break-even point, such as the margin of safety or geographical location. It is important for candidates to follow the instructions and parameters provided in questions correctly.
 - (d)** This was the least well-responded question in the paper, with a facility factor of 48.8%. Some candidates misinterpreted the demand of the question to be about a location choice, which involved an appraisal of each location without reference to break-even. More effective responses used a range of data available in the case study related to break-even, including the margin of safety and occasional references to profit/target setting, along with benefits and drawbacks of using break-even in decision-making. Better responses made detailed and balanced evaluations on the usefulness of break-even in the context of the case and used qualifying statements to support judgements. Typical responses were weak in application, had superficial analysis, and one-sided evaluation. To improve in similar high-tariff questions that require an evaluation of the usefulness of a business model/concept, candidates should be confident in using data from the case study effectively, presenting points on both sides of the argument, and providing a well-balanced evaluation.
- Q.4**
- (a)** Whilst the majority of candidates answered this question correctly, a significant minority did not achieve both marks available. The most common error was not including the £ sign and not dividing by the quantity. It was clear that some candidates did not know the formula to calculate added value. It is advised that candidates are familiar with the different formulae in the specification and practice calculations, including feedback on the method and final answer, using correct units.
 - (b)** Despite the question stating, "apart from reducing unit costs," a significant proportion of candidates did not achieve marks because they referenced a reduction in unit costs. Many candidates were able to explain how added value could be increased but lacked application to the case study or context. The indicative content includes appropriate examples of effective use of the case. Candidates should be reminded to include context in their response rather than writing a theoretical answer that could apply to any business.

- Q.5**
- (a)** Many candidates provided a good definition of the term "brand," expressing their understanding clearly. In a minority of cases, candidates did not know the definition or only demonstrated partial understanding, for example referencing a logo without any other characteristics such as differentiation from competitors. Testing candidates on key terms to provide feedback on the accuracy of the definition would be useful to ensure key terms are defined in sufficient detail.
 - (b)** Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of above-the-line promotion. Some candidates did not provide an example, as instructed in the question, and occasionally candidates incorrectly provided a response for below-the-line promotion. The most common response correctly referred to mass media such as television being used to communicate with a large audience.
 - (c)** Many candidates were able to construct the product life cycle correctly and were awarded full marks. A significant minority did not gain marks for correct labelling and/or positioning of the product life cycle stages. Some diagrams suggested a lack of understanding of product life cycles. To improve, candidates should practice accurate construction and illustration of different diagrams, including labelling of axes where appropriate.
 - (d)** Similar to Q.2(c), this was a relatively demanding question with a facility factor of 62.2%. Candidates that scored well generally defined the Boston Matrix, discussed its usefulness and counterpoints, and finished with an evaluation. It was common for candidates to miss counterpoints and provide superficial evaluations. Better responses included balanced analysis and detailed, supported judgements, showing a solid grasp of the Boston Matrix and its use. Some candidates confused it with the product life cycle. To improve in high-tariff questions, candidates should present points on both sides of the argument and provide a balanced evaluation. Reviewing mark schemes from previous series can help show the range of points that could be made for similar questions involving evaluation of business models.
- Q.6**
- (a)** Many candidates provided a good definition of the term "cash flow forecast," expressing their understanding clearly. In a minority of cases, candidates referred to profit and did not include reference to it being for the future. Testing candidates on key terms to provide feedback on the accuracy of the definition would be useful.
 - (b)** This question was generally accessible given its high tariff and the availability of marks for analysis and evaluation. Many candidates understood the meaning of the sale of assets, but more candidates lacked confidence in expressing their knowledge of debt factoring, misunderstanding it as a form of debt that needed to be repaid. The case study was generally used well to support answers. When debt factoring was understood correctly, effective responses involved analysing benefits and drawbacks of each option for raising finance and making a supported recommendation. Some candidates did not make a recommendation. Candidates should read the possible themes for evaluation in the indicative content to incorporate more evaluation into questions of this type.

- Q.7**
- (a)** Candidates generally provided two correct duties of employers, often citing paying at least the minimum wage and adhering to health and safety legislation. The most common error occurred when candidates were not specific in their responses, for example by stating "paying wages" and "providing good working conditions."
 - (b)** This question was the second least well-answered in the paper, with a facility factor of 58.9%. Although many candidates outlined appropriate methods of non-financial motivation, typically job rotation and job enrichment, these were not applied to the case study in many cases. Some candidates referred to financial motivation in their responses. Candidates should be reminded to use the case study to support their responses with appropriate examples and context.
 - (c)** This was the most accessible of the three 8-mark questions in this paper, with a facility factor of 68.9%. Candidates were confident in communicating their knowledge of workforce planning and provided effective analysis of situations where businesses had too many or too few employees, supported by an evaluation of the importance of having the correct number of employees. Better responses also analysed having employees with the appropriate skills and experience, as required by the question. Better candidates were able to separate analysis for each aspect of the question. Evaluation was often limited, even when analysis was excellent. It is important for candidates to review and practice writing more effective evaluations that are balanced, well-developed, and include qualifying statements.

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COMPONENT 2: BUSINESS ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY

Overview of the Component

- Component 2 overall was answered to a high standard, with lots of candidates accessing the higher mark bands. Most candidates managed their timings well across the exam and the final question on the paper had an attempt rate of 99.2%, suggesting most candidates reached the end. The questions with lower attempt rates were shorter questions in the middle of the paper, suggesting that this was because of lack of knowledge, not because of poorly managed timings.
- With the exception of Q.6(b), candidates were writing in a succinct manner, and a high proportion of responses fitted into the allocated space. This was aided by the extra space given for additional material directly after the question. A smaller proportion of candidates than usual used additional sheets at the back, and most candidates correctly labelled the additional responses. In some cases, poor handwriting made question numbers difficult to read and therefore harder for markers to find the correct section.
- In addition to this, the standard of handwriting was perhaps a little poorer than previous series, and this made marking at times quite difficult. However, in a positive change to previous series, more candidates were making effective use of paragraphs, which made it easier to structure arguments and for markers to follow.
- Following on from previous series, the presentation of numerical data continues to improve. Most numerical answers are expressed in the correct format, with the correct units of measurement and to two decimal places. A small number of candidates failed to do this, and on occasion the mark scheme penalised them for this. As in previous series, the numerical questions often carry an AO1 mark for the formula, and it is again advised that candidates write this out into their response in case of making a mistake in their calculations, this was especially relevant in Q.4(d).
- Knowledge across the paper was good with most candidates attempting most of the questions. This was perhaps weakest in Q.3(d) and Q.4(c) where candidates were not sure how to answer the question. Additionally, some candidates are not putting enough detail into definition responses. It is advised that two points are made to help achieve the 'detailed definition' descriptor. Analysis chains appeared to be slightly weaker than in previous series with lots of responses lacking in chains of argument and shorter paragraphs. A noticeable difference in AO4 were candidates who used context-based judgement and made it relevant to the question and situation. This made these responses stand out and achieve the higher band marks. It was also important that candidates showed 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 explain why a business may choose to rationalise and is a good example of why it is good practice to include a definition in an answer if there is a key term from the specification. Successful candidates' answers started with a definition and then explained one reason. It was pleasing to see that many candidates referred to an increase in efficiency as being the main outcome, which helped achieve good knowledge marks. Stronger responses for analysis gave a reason for doing it and then developed it. This was sometimes an explanation of what it leads to or an explanation of how that benefit is achieved. This question had a relatively low attempt rate of 96.9%, suggesting that a proportion of candidates did not understand the key term.
- Q.2** This question required candidates to analyse and interpret a given piece of data, presented as a pie chart, assessing the first point of the Component 2 specification. 99.6% of candidates attempted this question showing its accessibility. For application marks, most candidates were able to access one mark by using a piece of data from the chart. For good application, candidates were able to look at more information about the wider context of the music streaming market such as being fast changing and ever growing. Strong answers linked this into a judgement point to discuss how it limits the usefulness of the data, as it would quickly become out of date, especially as it was from 2021. This context-based judgement was pleasing to see in stronger responses. For analysis in this question, candidates needed to explain how this data could be used by a new business and what decisions could be made from it, such as who to benchmark against, or what their entry USP might be. Although not essential, it was pleasing to see candidates conclude the response with an overall summary of the usefulness and what else might be useful to help make the decision to enter the market.
- Q.3**
- (a)** This was a definition question but was worth 3 marks as it also required an example. This was well answered on the whole with a mean score of 2.2 and an attempt rate of 99.7%. Stronger responses used the word 'debts', as opposed to more vague terms such as 'things' or 'costs'. It was also required that the examples were clearly items that would be paid back in the short term. For example, a bank loan would be seen as too vague, as that could also be a non-current liability. Stronger responses had included more than one point in the definition, as without this it was difficult to award 2 marks for a detailed definition.
 - (b)** In this question, candidates were required to complete 2 calculations using the same formula. 99% of candidates attempted this question, with a mean score of 2.3 out of 3. It was pleasing to see that most candidates expressed the answer to 2 decimal places as per the instruction in the question, and answers on the whole were expressed as a % showing an improvement on previous series. As the 2nd mark was awarded for correctly calculating the net profit, it was helpful for candidates to show their workings as this meant more marks could be awarded even if the final answer was incorrect.
 - (c)** This question was in the same format as Q.3(b) but had a much lower attempt rate of 96.7% and a slightly lower mean score of 2.2 out of 3, suggesting a trickier area of the specification. A small number of incorrect responses had tried to multiply the answer by 100, and some had forgotten to express as a ratio.

- (d) This question required candidates to evaluate the financial information provided to suggest a way to improve the liquidity. This was a harder question, with an attempt rate of 97.1% but a low facilitating factor of 40.1% (the mean mark expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark). The strongest responses first commented on the current liquidity position (using the answer to Q.3(c)), made a valid suggestion to improve the current position, and then criticised the suggestion made. It was also good practice for candidates to draw on other information in the given balance sheet to give more context to the suggestion, and why it would/wouldn't be more likely to work in this specific context.
- Q.4** (a) These were three 1-mark questions asking candidates to fill in missing numbers on the critical path diagram and were the most accessible questions on the paper with all three having attempt rates above 99% and facilitating factors above 80%.
- (b) This question required candidates to mark the critical path on the diagram given in the answer booklet. Lots of candidates left this blank, with the lowest attempt rate on the whole paper of 93.4%, perhaps suggesting candidates did not read the question accurately. Whilst it was accepted for the correct path to be demonstrated in different ways, it was most pleasing to see the majority demonstrated it with double slashes through the critical activities. Some candidates missed off the first activity which meant the mark was not awarded as the path needed to be fully complete. Some incorrect responses also marked simultaneous activities on the critical path, such as A and B, which therefore meant the mark was not awarded.
- (c) For this question, candidates were asked to make a recommendation on how to speed up the critical path. With an attempt rate of 96.8% and the lowest facilitating factor on the whole paper of 34.3%, candidates on the whole found this a difficult question. The most commonly given incorrect response was to either run activities simultaneously (already considered on the diagram), or to not complete certain activities at all, but this was also an invalid suggestion. For AO4 marks, the best responses gave a valid suggestion and then also considered a problem/reason why that might not work. For AO2 marks, limited application was awarded for picking out a critical activity to speed up, and it was pleasing to see stronger responses refer to and calculate float times on non-critical activities that may be used to help critical activities. This was good use of the data provided. Other routes to good application were referring to what the activities actually were from a qualitative point of view and making their arguments apply to that.
- (d) 99.4% of candidates attempted this question and scored a mean score of 2 out of 3. The most common reason for losing marks was incorrect presentation of the final answer, expressing as either a % or not including the minus sign. Some candidates had calculated the change in price correctly but then inputted this into the formula upside down. This again demonstrated why it is good practice to write out the formula, not only as a guide but also to gain extra AO1 marks if the calculation is completed incorrectly.

- (e) This evaluation question asked candidates to use the information to decide if the zoo should increase the price of admission. The general structure used by candidates was an argument using the response to Q.4(d) as justification to increase the price because it was price inelastic, then another reason either for or against a price increase, and then most stronger responses gave an overall judgement to ensure they responded to the question. Although referring to the elasticity answer was not an essential requirement, this was the main argument used by stronger responses. Strong responses also used the wider context of the zoo to achieve both good application and to give context to the judgement. This question had a response rate of 99% and a facilitating factor of 59.7%.
- Q.5** (a) This question required candidates to calculate the percentage change between two figures, a basic quantitative skill that is often assessed in the qualification. Most candidates were able to attempt this (99.8% - the highest on the paper), and a mean score of 1.4. Again, accuracy of presentation was required, expressed both as a decrease and to two decimal places.
- (b) This was a two-mark definition question that required a detailed definition of multi-channel distribution. 99.4% of candidates attempted this question and was quite accessible with a mean score of 1.3. Most candidates easily accessed the first mark referring to more than one way to distribute a product. The most common way to access the second mark was to give examples of different channels, such as online and direct or through a retailer. A small number of responses were deemed too vague if they just described a channel of distribution e.g. selling through retailers.
- (c) This was the first of the three extended questions on the paper, that was based on the SWOT analysis section of the specification, and was the best answered extended question with a facilitating factor of 57.7%. A lot of data was provided in the stem for this question, and the majority of candidates used this well referencing several parts of the data in their response. The top answers were able to bring in the generic context of the sports industry and the fact that this was a new business with limited experience to access excellent application marks. The biggest limitation on this answer was accessing the AO4 marks. Most candidates were able to make limited judgements on what the data meant for entering the market. Better responses judged the likely accuracy of the data and why it may carry limited use. Top answers made context-based judgements, discussing the specific situation of the entrepreneurs in the question, not just the generic sportswear industry.
- Q.6** (a) A final definition question that asked candidates to define organic growth. This was the weakest answered definition question on this paper, with a mean score of 1 out of 2. Too many responses were very vague and only considered growth from within. Accurate definitions need to refer to the use of existing resources, and then the best responses gave examples of methods of organic growth to go alongside this.

- (b)** This question was a comparison essay that asked candidates to compare growth methods in the context of the supermarket industry. This question had the lowest facilitating factor of the three extended questions of 49%. The main reason for this was that a lot of responses were very generic and forgot to link to the context. Some responses achieved lower level AO2 marks for reference to the examples provided in the stem, but the stronger responses stood out when bringing in the wider context of when one type of growth would be more suitable, for example external is better in oligopoly markets to eliminate competition, but is also more likely to be blocked by the CMA, so this was not only able to access higher AO2 marks but also higher AO4 marks for context based judgement. Responses were often quite long for this question with candidates looking at pros and cons of both methods. When approaching this type of question this way, be careful not to repeat the same arguments in reverse. For example, some candidates argued that organic is better as it is cheaper, but then argued a negative of external was that it was more expensive therefore repeating their comparison.

Q.7 The final question of the paper asked candidates to evaluate the importance of mission statements and values in the context of the BBC. With an attempt rate of 99.2%, it was pleasing to see that most candidates found this accessible and managed their timings on the paper well to ensure they finished all questions. Knowledge of mission statements was often quite limited, with few candidates linking to the main purpose of a mission statement being to guide a business's strategy and decision making, so it was pleasing to see responses built around the internal strategic use of a mission statement and values. Application was achieved in this response by linking to both the given statements and the context of a public sector organisation. To access the higher marks of AO4, a conclusion was advisable to make an overall judgement on the limited use of a mission and values apart from guiding strategy, and to reference both mission and values throughout.

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COMPONENT 3: BUSINESS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Overview of the Component

- Component 3 was answered to a good standard with several candidates able to access the higher mark bands. There were some inconsistencies with the percentage of questions attempted by candidates in section A. However, most candidates seemed to manage their timings well. The lowest attempt rate, 92.7%, was on Q.13. This question also identified a limited understanding of the Ansoff matrix amongst a range of candidates. Q.15 has the second lowest attempt rate at 94.1% and the lowest mean score in section A, of 4.5. This suggests that a few candidates were rushing this response in order to start section B. Timing can be an issue on this paper although many centres seem to have done an excellent job in preparing their candidates.
- Some scripts contained handwriting which was difficult to read. In these cases, it would be advisable for centres to consider whether it would be advantageous for candidates to word process responses. However, many scripts were of good legible quality with better candidates showing a good depth subject of knowledge in their chains of reasoning.
- Knowledge was varied between questions. In particular, Q.13 asks candidates to make use of the Ansoff matrix. Many candidates constructed answers using the Boston matrix. This type of misunderstanding created a significant problem for candidates in gaining marks. However, the majority of responses demonstrated a strong understanding of the specification content, and it was pleasing to see that candidates could draw upon theories from wider parts of the content to reinforce and progress their chain of reasoning.
- Application to the extended case study in section A was very good with many candidates demonstrating a high level of competence in extracting useful information from the case study to use as a base for their arguments. In section B, it was pleasing to see that the Part 1 questions were generally attempted more successfully than the 2023 series generating higher mean scores. This indicates that candidates showed a higher level of understanding in how to access the AO2 marks on these questions.
- Better candidates were able to demonstrate very strong analysis skills. Some scripts demonstrated strong development and excellent chains of reasoning supported by theory. Weaker candidates offered a range of points in short and undeveloped paragraphs which made it difficult to award marks in higher bands. If candidates discuss fewer points in more depth, it is more likely that a chain of reasoning will be developed which may score more highly than producing several undeveloped points.
- Most candidates attempted judgements at the end of each paragraph, but meaningful final paragraphs were often summaries rather than judgements. Better candidates weighed up the previous arguments to build an informed final conclusion.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.11** Candidates were asked to explain how contingency planning may be useful to McDonald's. Better candidates started with a definition of contingency planning. This is useful for the examiner in establishing whether the candidate has a good understanding of the topic.

Most candidates used problematic scenarios from the text and explained how contingency planning could alleviate negative consequences. The mean mark was 4.6 out of a maximum score of 8. Therefore, most candidates were able to access the majority of marks available. Application was generally good, but analysis was less strong in progressing the implications of contingency planning. Some candidates appeared to misread the question and time was wasted by explaining how contingency planning may not be useful. As this was not asked these disadvantages attracted no marks. Additionally, candidates sometimes offered a conclusion, with no AO4 marks on offer this was not necessary.

- Q.12** During this response the examiner was looking for responses to consider the impact of technology and training on productivity. Whilst candidates made good use of the case study, a few focused on technology or training therefore did not fully answer the question. This limited marks and excluded the achievement of the top mark band. Candidates must take care to fully respond to the question.

However, the facility factor of 63.4 demonstrates that most candidates achieved the majority of marks. This was the most frequently completed question with 99.2% of candidates attempting a response. Some candidates focused on the impact of technology and training upon the business's profits or market share rather than focusing on their impact on productivity. Better candidates focused on both labour productivity and capital productivity, both of which were appropriate to the question.

- Q.13** This question had the widest standard deviation of any section A question, of 2.6. This was largely due to 2 factors. Firstly, some candidates focused their response upon the Boston Matrix which significantly impacted their ability to access high level mark bands. Centres are advised to make a clear distinction between the two models as they are too often confused in examination responses. Other candidates focused on the growth aspect of the question making no reference to the Ansoff Matrix. Again, this is likely to be the result of unfamiliarity with the Ansoff Matrix.

Better candidates clearly outlined the sections of the Ansoff matrix and identified examples of each of the Ansoff categories from the text analysing their importance in assisting McDonald's to achieve global growth. The attempt rating of 92.7% also indicates a lack of subject knowledge around this model.

- Q.14** In this question, candidates were asked to evaluate the impact of McDonald's aims for 2030 on its business and its stakeholders. With a facility factor of 60.4, most candidates found this question quite accessible. Equally, the attempt rate of 98.2% was relatively high. Most candidates made clear reference to the specified aims within the case study and developed good lines of analysis and evaluation. However, some candidates focused solely on the business or the stakeholders rather than considering both areas. Implications to the business may have included any impact on strategy or key indicators of success such as market share.

Some excellent evaluation was seen amongst better candidates with judgements being placed in the context of McDonald's demonstrating a high level of in-context evaluation. This added to the high facility factor achieved on this question.

- Q.15** With a facility factor of 45.4 this was the weakest average response in section A. Whilst some candidates seemed in a rush to move on to section B and therefore offered limited responses, others seemed to struggle with the ethical part of the answer. Better candidates focused on the strategic marketing opportunities generated by possessing ethical credentials, whilst others focused on the ability to access niche markets or the impact upon price elasticity offered by an ethical standpoint. Weaker candidates struggled with the concept of not-for-profit businesses. This was a common theme, and it would be useful for centres to spend time on explaining the concept of generating a surplus and how this differs from profit. Some candidates did not consider the usefulness of businesses taking up an ethical standpoint as this would add to costs. The best responses came from candidates considering different strategic positions such as those offering a cost-leadership approach as opposed to businesses seeking to differentiate themselves from competitors by taking an ethical standpoint.
- Q.21** Question 2 was the most popular amongst the options available with approximately 44% of candidates attempting a response. This question required candidates to explain how the risks faced by an online retailer when starting to trade in a new country may be managed. As usual, the mark allocation contained 4 AO2 marks. The best candidates provided real world examples of how online retailers had managed risk in the aforementioned situation showing a sound grasp of the business world. Weaker responses ignored the online element of the scenario and in doing so limited the ability to reach the highest AO2 band. Candidates must fully engage with the scenario in the question to perform well in this style of question. Stronger candidates covered numerous management techniques whereas weaker candidates described risks with little attempt to explain how they could be managed. With a facility factor of 51.2, candidates on average, accessed the majority of marks available.

- Q.22** This was an open question in which candidates had the ability to select any external change and consider its impact upon business activity. With a mean score of 10.1 out of 20 possible marks responses to this question were similar to those of the other Part 2 options. It was pleasing to see candidates draw on knowledge from real world examples to develop their responses and explain the impact of external factors upon business success. Better responses brought in supporting theory to support ideas and develop chains of reasoning. Weaker responses were one sided and focused on story telling rather than making informed judgements.

It was pleasing to see that candidates had a good grasp of evaluation. Most candidates attempted to judge each paragraph point. The strongest final judgements weighed up evidence from the main body of the candidate's discussion to consider which businesses are more or less affected. However, final evaluations were often a summary of previous points rather than a clear overall judgement.

- Q.31** This was the least favoured of the optional questions with an attempt rate of 14.6%. With a mean score of 4.4 out of 10 this was also the weakest performing of the Section B Part 1 questions. Subject knowledge seemed to be the main cause of low scoring responses with candidates describing oligopolistic or monopolistic markets rather than monopolistic competition. More successful candidates made excellent use of the scenario and brought in real world examples to explain features such as low barriers to entry. Explaining how the features of monopolistic competition mapped onto the high street fashion market was the key to high scoring responses. With the widest standard deviation of all the Section B Part 1 questions, 2.2 marks, this question saw a range of excellent and less well-judged responses.

- Q32** This was an open question allowing candidates to draw from a range of content areas when considering the impact of economic recovery on businesses. Most candidates focused responses on inferior, normal and superior goods with real world examples. Others brought in economic content to display their knowledge of changing interest rates, inflation and unemployment when discussing the changing nature of the market.

As in Q31, this question had the widest standard deviation of all the Section B Part 2 questions, 3.4 marks. Weaker responses focused on repeating the same impact on different businesses. For example, how Primark, Aldi and Lidl may suffer in a recovery due to their focus on selling inferior goods. This did not allow the examiner to see different facets of the candidate's knowledge base and therefore limited the ability to score highly.

Evaluation often focused on the type of good offered by a business with some candidates discussing the widening of product portfolios to aid survival or profit maximisation in changing markets. A few candidates brought in discussions around the dangers of asset-led businesses adjusting their strategy in economic recovery and losing the clarity of their brand perception by doing so.

- Q41** This question asked candidates to explain how car manufacturers would be affected by changes in taxation. As the most successful of the Section B Part 1 questions, candidates scored a facility factor of 54.4. The best responses considered a range of taxes and provided analysis of their impacts on both the car manufacturing business and the customer's willingness to purchase new vehicles. It was pleasing to see some strong responses with a clear understanding of both direct and indirect taxation. Weaker candidates made no reference to specific taxes, instead focusing on general ideas of increased or reduced costs.
- Q42** In a similar way to other Section B Part 1 questions, candidates were able to draw upon a range of content when responding to this question. Candidates were asked to consider whether the government needs businesses more than businesses need the government. Responses often drew from real world examples outlining specific scenarios in which businesses would interact with government. Common areas for consideration were legal issues, fiscal and monetary policy. Some candidates also considered international trade and situations around single markets, tariffs and quotas.
- With a mean score of 10.7 marks from a possible 20 this was the most successfully answered Section B Part 1 question. The standard deviation was also the smallest at 2.9 demonstrating that candidates with a good knowledge in this area were able to achieve a consistent level of success.
- Evaluation skills were good amongst most responses. Candidates were able to give differing international contexts to evaluate how some countries may make attempts to attract foreign businesses by offering incentives such as tax breaks, whereas other communist countries may actively discourage foreign businesses from entering their market.

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